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Dannabang Kuwabong, Anu Aneja

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Association for Research on Mothering
Room 726, Atkinson College, York University
4700 Keele Street, Toronto, ON M3J 1P3
Tel: (416) 736-2100 ext. 60366 Fax: (905) 775-1386
Email: arm@yorku.ca; Website http//: www.yorku.ca/crm

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Front Cover

Stephanie Springgay, "Sindoor," hand-made paper, Sindoor powder, photograph, and acrylic paint, 40 cm x 40 cm x 24 cm, 1998.

The image depicts one of the 21 vessel forms from the installation Sindoor. The forms, cast from hand-made paper are lined with vermilion red Sindoor powder, which in turn cradle a fragmented photograph of a body part. The work examines the body in relation to history, cultural production, nature, and identity as a fragment. Fractured painted body parts speak of new composites in an exploration of both the ephemerality of the body and our desire to leave a mark: to create, organize, and understand. The works position the body between artifact and archive, as a region of uncertainty.

Fiona Giles

Fountains of Love and Loveliness

In Praise of the Dripping Wet Breast

> If babies had a language and a script we would have been in possession long ago of a manual of polished love techniques for use between adults and babies. Clinical care and pedagogic concern would be cast onto the rubbish-tip of civilization.
>
> —Barbara Sichtermann, "The Lost Eroticism of the Breasts"

It's often speculated in the breastfeeding literature that one reason breastfeeding has been such a hard sell in the post-industrial West is that we prefer to think of the female breast as the most sociable of sex aids, rather than as a customized food delivery system for babies and young children. It is not just that the breast is considered by some to be too sexy for motherhood, hence the property of adult males, and an object that must be protected from the wear and tear that breastfeeding is sometimes reputed to involve. Instead, if you look at this argument more closely, the breast in question—which is an idealized, deodorized, and denatured breast—promises a certain kind of Disneyfied, cartoon sex that is free from many of the risks relating to real, grungy, grown-up sex. While on the one hand this breast is being protected from the hard yakka of long-term lactation, it is also being straight-jacketed into a particularly narrow concept of nooky, a kind of second-base substitute for the real thing.

Not just adult males, but women too, have been seduced by this notion of the breast as both exquisitely refined, yet erogenous, a part of the sexual body that can be adored without the ambivalence or horror that the genitals are apt to inspire. This is sex with arrested development, safely packaged in broderie anglaise, and draped by a cashmere twin-set, awaiting its first grope in the secure darkness of cinema or car. It is the same breast that might now be bared on certain beaches, and has gradually become acceptable in women's magazine

spreads and commercial TV drama.

Unlike the penis and vagina, the idealized breast holds no problematic associations with excrement, or with the blood of menses and childbirth. The idealized breast does not carry the same risk of unpredictable emissions or excretions, the echoes and traces of birth and death. Breasts are neither cataclysmic nor smelly. If they have the same magical power as the genitals to change when touched, these idealized breasts do not hold the threat of gushing tumescence found in those humid lowlands that are apt to flood. Instead, the breast's gentle perkiness acts as a decorous marker to turmoil elsewhere, remaining as calmly distinct from its torrid groundswell as is a daisy to the compost on which it is nourished. This fantasy of the breast as hermetically sealed, warm and dry, modest and constant, is a masterwork of PR spin promising a kind of chocolate-box sex free of pregnancy, disease, or the free-falling humiliations of erotic love.

The western breast has been tuned to such a breezy, playful niceness, that its sexiness is almost in doubt. If it weren't for the crinkly, sometimes hairy or asymmetrical properties of the nipple, the breast would have slumped into Doris Day quaintness long ago. But thankfully, all that lace and spandex, all those colors and textures of bras and camisoles, are pressing, skimming, pinching, and above all, referring the eye to the tiny nub which mustn't be viewed without the closing of the curtains, the dimming of lights, the drawing of gauzy veils. Only the nipple threatens to disturb the breast's peachy innocence. It has the wrinkled, knobbly demeanor of an old witch, hinting slyly of darker things.

While the breast as a whole fails to age much, merely losing fullness or sloping gently downward over time, there is something undeniably prehistoric about the nipple. Although it is the defining feature of the mammal, it has a spookily reptilian aspect. In the nipple are to be found the references to birth and blood, along with the traces and echoes of milky eruptions for those inclined towards bottle-free mothering.

But for most, the idea of the breast remains a dry one, exemplifying containment, neatness and the promise of a sexuality that coexists with exquisite manners. As the early 1970s feminists knew well, the brassiered breast symbolizes the reconciliation of desire and order. If the concept of justice can be represented by scales, then the over-arching social order could do worse than to adopt the Wonderbra as its monument to the containment of sexual chaos by the rule of law.

So you can see, quite apart from the practical difficulties of breastfeeding that are so often listed—paternal jealousy, workplace intolerance, maternal fatigue, inadequate antenatal education and post-natal support, misplaced modesty, shopping mall inconvenience, and the inability to measure its volume—the project to revive the wet status of the breast, that is, the lactating breast, pushes up against fundamental cultural barriers whose job it is to painstakingly separate erotic adult sexuality from all other forms of human

interaction. Unbeknownst to themselves, lactation consultants and other breastfeeding advocates are drilling holds in the fragile dike that is holding the monstrously threatening wet zone at bay.

Thinking of the human body as less self-contained than our culture wishes to believe, I began to draw up a taxonomy of The Stuff That Comes Out of Us, and to order it into categories. Firstly, starting at the bottom (of both the list, and the body), are the excretory fluids, such as urine and feces. This is waste matter for which there is little use and some danger if not disposed of thoughtfully. Into this category, which we might call the base category, should also go pus, phlegm, and vomit since these are a diseased form of discharge requiring eradication. Such things must be hidden, buried, and burnt—or if you live in any number of cities around the world, flushed to the rivers and beaches.

In the second category, occupying a middle-ground, belongs blood and other useful fluids which require retention and care, and may be recycled. Sweat, saliva, and ear wax also belong to this category of neutral usefulness. Although some would see cause for squeamishness in handling these fluids, this has more to do with preserving safety between bodies. There is no need for personal banishment, and some room for auto-celebration, particularly amongst those who think God invented car keys to remove earwax, or people who have trouble leaving their scabs alone. Amniotic fluid might also belong in this neutral category since it is useful but ultimately disposed of.

Blood can seem alarming, and our relation to menstrual blood might be ambivalent at best, so that menstrual blood is closer to the base category. But this is not because blood is itself a dangerous fluid, except in more recent HIV and Hepatitis C times. (Indeed, of all the bodily fluids, blood is the one most readily recycled, in transfusions.) Rather, the fear of blood traditionally stems from it being evidence of calamity, its appearance caused by a breach in the integrity of the human frame.

Then there is the third category, which is somewhat on a pedestal since it enables procreation: semen and vaginal lubricants. Clearly semen is king here, but anyone who knows their Billings Method will appreciate the role of vaginal secretions in enabling or blocking conception. This category begins to take on a heavier cultural load, since it has magical properties worthy of worship, fetishization, and ritual concealment. The successful regulation of these fluids determines not only the viability of the species, but also its mental faculties if you consider that herd IQ is diminished by incest. Other public health considerations are necessary due to the risk of transmitting disease, so the elaborate moral customs surrounding their use makes perfect sense, even today.

What all these fluids have in common, is that they cause anxiety if they appear in an unregulated fashion within our culture. They undermine the social order, they pass through the membrane between inside and outside the body, between private and public, and between individuals, as we interact socially, familially, and sexually. In short, they justify rules.

Finally, there are two fluids that have a category each their own, although

related to each other. These are milk and tears. They are different from the other categories in that there is not the same risk attached to their promiscuous expression, yet regulatory customs continue to exist, and one wonders why.

Of these, milk is a food, which is somewhat prosaic, yet as important as semen to the sustaining of infant lives, even in this post-Nestle, and HIV/AIDS era. It may take on a supernatural significance in maintaining species viability, hence its cultural loading, yet apart from rituals that might support the mother's health and well-being, there is no logic to any constraints in its disbursement to that mother's child or, if she chooses, her other kin. There are a small number of reasons for constraint within the family, but these are economic rather than health-related. For example, where the mother is required in the workforce and having her baby with her might not be convenient to her employers; or where increased fertility rates are paramount, and early weaning seen as a means for the resumption of ovulation. Outside the immediate family, where cross-nursing might be considered, constraints are necessary for regulating the diet of the substitute breastfeeder. But such arrangements are usually self-regulating between consenting mothers.

Tears, too, can cause consternation if expressed in public. Being wet, they are a suspect element. Yet there is no survivalist imperative for their strict regulation or concealment. No virus has been transmitted, to my knowledge, via this saline solution. (Although care needs to be taken, and breast milk may be usefully applied, in cases of conjunctivitis.) The restriction of tears rests more on the need for the division of private and public zones, rational and irrational behavior, and the categories that set different behavioral standards for infants, children and adults. Like the argument about dope smoking leading to heroin addiction, it could be argued that the display of tears without averting the face or emanating shame would be the thin edge of the wedge, leading to emotional chaos and social anarchy. In this way tears suffer from the same taboo that applies to public breastfeeding of toddlers and older children. Although lachrymose youngsters and breastfeeding babies are tolerated, this merely reinforces the need to maintain a strict division between adult and infant behavior.

If civilization rests on the separation of wet from dry in human bodily function, with metaphysical thought at the arid pinnacle, and excrement in the swampy pits, then the role of the breastfeeding advocate takes on an intriguingly problematic cast. It's true, milk is up there with tears, close to God. Like tears, it is the physical manifestation of an affect—in each case love, joy, and sorrow can inspire release, while depression and anxiety can inhibit it. And human milk holds onto its appearance as a mystical food whose nutritional components are immeasurably perfect, and still in the process of being documented.

But sadly enough, milk is wet. It is prone to gush at inopportune moments. Worse still, it is not only Stuff That Comes Out, it is Stuff That Goes In as well, and in a sexually suggestive manner that rocks against the cradle of the incest

taboo and the fear of the sexualized minor. As Barbara Sichtermann observed over 15 years ago, in "The Lost Erotiicism of the Breasts," the whole procedure can be likened to adult sexual intercourse. She writes, "The tip of the breast, a highly sensitive, erectile organ pushes its way into the baby's warm and moist oral cavity. While the lips, jaws and gums close around the organ, massaging it in a rhythmic sucking motion, it discharges its special juice into the child's deeper oesophageal region." (1986: 64) And that's without mentioning the shadow of cannibalism that breastfeeding also casts.

The leakiness of motherhood in general swirls around the fact that birthing is itself the ultimate mechanism for the catastrophic evacuation of one body from another. A baby is itself Stuff That Comes Out. Hence motherhood is forced to uncomfortably straddle the two zones, being mystically dry and supernaturally abstracted by its religious representations, while needing for its rights and practical support to insist on the physical tumult of its daily circumstances. Hence the importance of the breast as maternal icon. Its apparent dryness is perfect for the first, ennobling spin; but its forgotten wetness must necessarily be revived if the practical support, for mothers to perform as fully as they wish in our culture, is to be provided.

Looking afresh at impediments to the free expression of human milk in our culture, we can lay aside theories of the sexual breast competing with the maternal breast and repressing its functionality. For it turns out that the existing, over-hyped eroticism of the breast is a somewhat tamed and unsexual thing. We need to recognize that the breast is *incompletely* sexualized, that its intrinsic wetness has been repressed, and that there is a sexual component to breastfeeding and motherhood whose art might be celebrated and passed on within families. Rather than beating Daddy off with a stick while wailing imprecations against the patriarchal misrepresentation of female body parts, mothers should be inviting fathers in for a taste of the art of motherlove. Women (and men) could not only be enjoying their milk and their leaky breasts, and holding super soaker distance spraying competitions, but considering how the father might offer his own breasts to comfort his baby. Barbara Sichtermann again:

> We women can and must put pressure on men, force them to take on some of the duties involved in looking after children. It is essential that these duties are shared if women are to win equality in any other field. But we can also *win over* men by offering them a share in pleasure. Babies are looking for food and comfort from the breast—and they could get comfort just as well from the fine and sensitive breasts of men." (1986: 67)

Because a fluid is involved in breastfeeding, and this fluid is exchanged between individuals, certain cultural regulations are necessary. Needless to say, we don't wish babies' milk supply to be threatened by excessive demand from

over-excited gourmandizing adults—although this problem might also be solved if chilled, pasteurized breastmilk were available at the corner store. But laying aside our moral panic about paedophilia, and the fashion for policing parent-child intimacy, it should be acknowledged that the celebration of the body and its functions within the family need not inspire incest, and may in time be shown to thwart it. As author of *The Eros of Parenthood* Noelle Oxenhandler argues,

> We were in denial about the reality of child abuse for so long that it's understandable that we have reacted with a black and white mentality. I think it's time to find a middle ground where we can acknowledge that the erotic pleasure that propels us to reproduce is part of the same pleasure that propels us to nurture our children, and that's something to be celebrated, not denied. It's a truism of psychology that what we can't acknowledge is what causes problems. (cited in Lewin, 2001: 2)

To conclude the first half of this essay, the problem is not in the sexualization of the breast, but in the narrowness of our current ideas about sex, and the limited role of the breast as a sex object. It's also in the desexualizing of the mothering process overall due to an over-heated anxiety about the incest taboo, and a squeamishness regarding the continuity between the act of sex, the drama of delivery, and the mechanics of the ongoing relationship with the child. From diaper changing and spoon-feeding, to toilet training and beyond, physical intimacy between parents and their children involves the gradual ritualizing of our relationship to wetness, as a feature of our relationship to each other. As the novelist Ginu Kamani (2001) puts it, "All the bodily fluids are erotic. Full stop."[1]

I would now like to discuss four images that I have collected while researching my book on breastfeeding, *Fresh Milk* (forthcoming, 2003), and which show some of the different ways in which breastfeeding has been depicted in western culture. (This is not an exhaustive art history of the subject, however!) The first is a painting by Picasso; the second, a photograph of a European tombstone; the third is from a soft porn website; and the fourth is a photograph of Naomi Campbell by David Lachapelle (1999) entitled "Have You Seen Me?"

The first image is Picasso's *Mother and Child*, a twentieth-century rendition of the Madonna and child, showing the Christian semi-deification of the feeding mother, who is focused on her baby. The baby is securely wrapped and reveals only his head and one side of his face. The child takes on religious, Christ-like attributes, since he is sanctified through her gaze, and bears none of the cherubic, sexualized Cupid imagery of classical mythology. Contrary to Picasso's ribald images of women, this one is extremely Victorian, with its almost bowdlerized version of the nippleless bosom.

The breast is globe-like, just as in Renaissance paintings, it glows mysteri-

ously white, and is literally the center-piece of the painting. In some ways Picasso's image is more naturalistic and romantic than the Renaissance genre of *maria lactans* paintings which it echoes. But with the flower in her hair, which has tendrils floating free, and her lips slightly parted, this is a demure sexuality. The hands of the baby and the mother are "on the table," in the light, and proper. The flower in the mother's hair, as well as on her shawl, are in this case signifiers of innocence, nature and virginity, with no trace of the bordello about them.

The second image is of a nursing mother outside a crypt, with her baby and older child. I don't have a source for this, as it is from Maureen Minchin's private collection of breastfeeding images, but I believe it is from a volume of photographs of European tombstones; and this is from a nineteenth-century French example. It shows a woman with a baby at her breast while she is pushing open the door of the crypt, as if to follow the dead, and take her newborn with her. Sitting inside the fence of the memorial, is the figure of a young boy looking out as though he longs for the freedom of a happier past. The mother is dressed in informal robes, and has bare feet. Her baby reaches up, holding onto her dress, while clasped to her partially exposed breast. It is unclear who has died here: the children's' father, the mother, the baby, or both. Whoever it is, the survivors are trapped by grief, wanting to follow their loved-one into death as the nursing baby obliviously continues to suckle. The older child yearns for escape from this cage, he alone, attached to life's pull.

My own reading of the image is that the father has died, and his family is represented in their grief. The mother's role as mother, partner, and lover is made explicit, and the connection between sex, mothering, and death is also allowed to be forged here in an unusually graphic way. Although the image of breastfeeding is decorous, the mother's bare feet, and the social context given to breastfeeding while doing other things, indicates a certain level of fevered chaos. She is not focused on her child, nor calm, as in the Renaissance and Picasso paintings; and her sexuality, expressed through longing for death, has become continuous with her act of feeding the baby. This is an extremely unusual image of breastfeeding, and one that raises many questions about why

the images we are most familiar with are so narrow, and blandly domesticated.

The third image is from a free website of lactating porn images, which raises the question of what a good definition of pornography really is. (Unfortunately, this was emailed to me without a reference, so I can't credit the website.) It is such a wholesome depiction of a natural act, which does good for babies, it's almost purely due to its context, that it qualifies as pornography. If I hadn't been told it was from a soft-porn website, I might not have guessed.

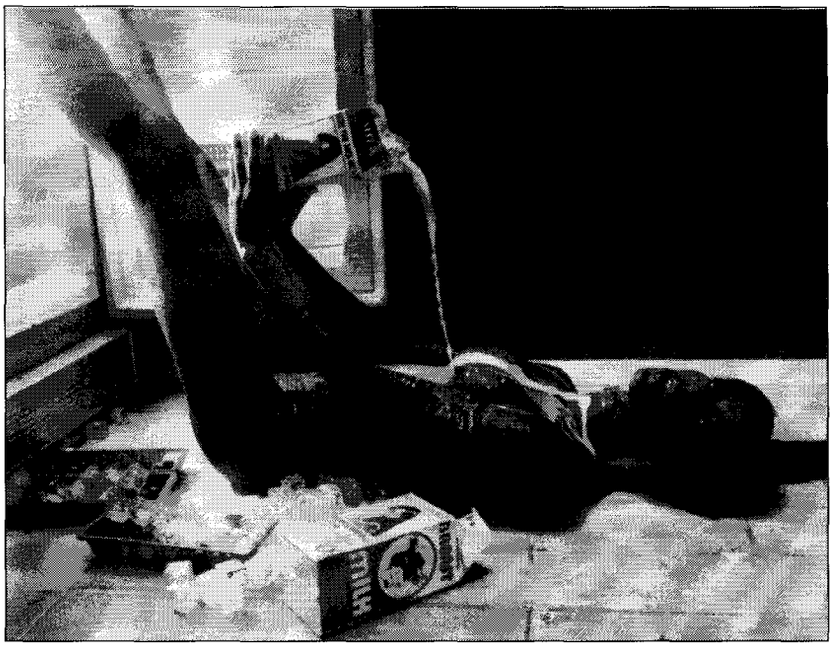
An attractive African-American woman, with a model-size body and small breasts, is hand-expressing milk into a small milk bottle, not unlike those issued by milk pump manufacturers. She is naked but for white stockings and fuschia colored nail polish on well-manicured hands and a touch of matching lipstick. She too is looking down at her breast in a demure manner, her eyes almost closed due to the downward angle of her face. The aversion of her gaze is typical of pornography, since it allows for the unchallenged intrusion of the viewer. In this case, it shows her complete absorption in the process of expressing, and—apart from her concentration on the task—her face gives away little. Her expression, in both senses, is shown as a simple, private act.

Only her black pubic hair, highlighted by white stockings, emphasizes her sexual potential.

Although there is a desecration of a sacred act here, since the woman's milk is going into a bottle rather than a baby's mouth, such bottles have become stand-in symbols of motherhood anyway, so this is barely jarring. (Even those who eschew bottle-feeding will allow for expression under certain circumstances.) In the background, lying on the floor, is a pair of weights, giving the scene a wholesome, health-conscious cast, as though the woman might be expressing for the good of her own health. (If a copy of Sandra Steingraber's new book *Having Faith: An Ecologist's Journey to Motherhood* were also lying on the floor, we would know it was to eliminate toxins!)

This image contrasts to wilder lactation porn where the milk is being sprayed into a man's mouth or over his body and genitals. And it could be assumed that this milk will perhaps be saved for the baby. The sexualization of the woman, with her stockings and pubic hair, is muted by the fact that her legs are demurely closed and her stockings are white. There is a clinical air about this photograph, but it counts as perverse in our culture since it portrays a swerving away from milk's "proper" use, together with the implied pleasure of model and viewer. It could also be classed as pornographic since it sexualizes lactation in an explicit, if muted way. But there is very little that could be labeled offensive about it; and I'm inclined to think it's the sort of image that could usefully be co-opted to help in the loosening up of our views about the place and meaning of breastfeeding.

The last image is a photograph of Naomi Campbell taken by David Lachapelle. Here the model is seen lying on the floor, naked, with her legs in the fridge, while pouring a carton of her own commodified breastmilk over her body. There are ice cubes spilled on the floor around her, together with an open milk carton with the words "Breast" and "Milk" clearly printed on the side—as well as the image of a cow's face. The carton she pours milk from also bears an image of her face, with the words, "Have you Seen Me?" and "Naomi Campbell."



Naomi has turned her face directly to the camera, so the whites of her eyes are visible, and her mouth open. She has a crystalline perspex collar around her neck, echoing the ice, and adding to the sense of her being a captured exotic animal, challenging her captors by trashing the kitchen and turning them on.

The athletic black supermodel is easily portrayed as animalistic, close to nature, exotic, and wild. She is trapped in a suburban domestic setting of tameness, if not enslavement—perhaps echoing unconsciously the association between slavery and wetnursing for African American women—something Linda Blum refers to in *At the Breast* (1999: 147). However, her relationship to her milk results in an acknowledgment of the inevitable excess of all female bodies, and their relationship to the abject, which Julia Kristeva has so eloquently written about in *The Powers of Horror* (1982). No matter the ice cubes, the cool blue light from the fridge, or the use of marketing aids such as milk cartons, *milk spills out*, and the body refuses to acknowledge any boundaries forced upon it by culture. In this image, milk refuses to be regulated. (Just as in heterosexual pornography, semen refuses to be regulated.) The implied answer to the question of the title, is "No, you haven't seen me. Not 'till now."

At the same time, there is an implication of all women's enslavement precisely through the potential commodification of breastmilk. The photograph plays it both ways: it is an invitation to play with women's milk and with its potential for both sexualization and commodification; and it protests the enslavement of women's body that might result from this play. There is a tension—reinforced by the title's reference to all modeling images —between

the woman's taking pleasure in her own body, including its bodily fluids, and the pleasures others may take from it, with or without consent.

Although Lachapelle has used lactating models in other photos, notably "Milk Maidens" (1996), collected in his volume *Hotel Lachapelle* (1999), this image takes the idea a step further with the suggestion that milk can be packaged and sold commercially, while retaining a transgressive, sexual quality. And it is this, above all, which defines the photograph. Produced initially for *Playboy,* it bears the hallmark of all representations of women as sexually alluring, yet it is liberating in the way it allows for women's milk to be part of that allure. It is as though a hairy armpit had suddenly appeared unbidden in these pages, looking gorgeous. (The image also refers to the U.S. milk advertising campaign which used Campbell, amongst others, to pose with a milk mustache on her upper lip.)

In both of the last two images, there is a suggestion of lactation as an auto-erotic process, expanding the purpose of lactation from infant feeding to include both female and male pleasure. As in many scenes in lactation pornography videos, such as Ed Deroo's *Lactamania* Series (from 1994), the lactating mother occupies center stage, and her milk-producing breasts are the stars of the show. In many of these videos, the woman is both object and subject, and her body shifts from receptacle to agent. Rather than the *tabula rasa* for semen at the point of the "money shot," the lactating porn star eclipses this conventional image of dramatic climax and male satisfaction, by continuing to spray, wherever she pleases, indefinitely. (For more on these videos, see my article "The Nipple Effect," 2001; and *Fresh Milk*, forthcoming 2003.)

Placed end-to-end, these images show the various stages of desexualizing, then resexualizing the lactating breast. I would argue that the sexualized breast is potentially useful to the purposes of lactation support providers, and need not be repressed on the grounds of propriety. I would further suggest that images from lactation erotica might be co-opted to the cause of naturalizing the lactating breast. I'm not recommending that we show entire blue movies to expectant mums, but certain highlights could demonstrate some useful techniques for hand expression, and introduce an element of sensuality and fun in what is otherwise often a clinically pious setting. There is no reason why the exorbitantly—even wastefully—lactating breast should not be acknowledged as part of the spectrum of breastliness. (As with other pornography genres, women could also take charge, and produce some better quality material, such as the work being done by the Bend Over Boyfriend producers in San Francisco.) Rethinking ways of representing breasts to ourselves, and allowing for a freer expression of the fully functioning breast within both maternal and more plainly erotic contexts, might free women to feel more at ease with their breastmilk, and to more confidently take pleasure in the processes of feeding and lactating. Sichtermann argues that breastfeeding

> is a partial expression of female sexuality and yet there is no awareness

> or understanding of it today, no culture attached to it and not even an inkling of its rank as a sexual potentiality...Even during periods when breastfeeding was in favor—most recently in our [twentieth] century—there has not been the right climate for developing fully the sensuality which centres on the breasts. (1986: 65)

Sichtermann's article was written before lactation erotica and pregnancy porn became a small but significant corner of the fetish market. Perhaps she would be buoyed by knowledge of its current success, and its potential for cooption. Whether or not erotica is the admittedly problematic key to returning pleasure to lactation, the point these images can make for us is surely valid: breastfeeding is not only for the edification of the mother, the nourishment of the baby, or the development of a bond between them—it is also an expression of the embodied self.

Several efforts have been made to find sources for all of the images included in this article and the author would welcome any information in this regard. Any suggestions should be forward to the editors of this volume.

[1]Kamani is the author of "Younger Wife" a story about alternative uses of breastmilk. See *Junglee Girl* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Press, 1995: 95-100).

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Cornelia Hoogland

Difference is the Beauty

Women dressing and undressing
in a steamy bathroom
in a converted schoolhouse,
their breast-continuum like the ample
belly of the bell curve.
Sixteen pair. Not a silicone
tear-shape, not a pin-up
among the jingle-swing
also the small cuppable
parade of them. These
fruit tinted gold as day
light through the window.

Women drop terry robes
and towels. Each pair
of symmetrical breasts
different from each other pair
(and one has lost its mate).
Each an original that resists
the endless reproduction of perfection
—those stacks of plastic *K-Mart* salad bowls.
Instead a gardener's variegated delight.

Along the cedar fence the mock orange
blooms its fragrance of feathers,
feathers Ann scatters
just before the group photograph
which makes us a little crazy
reaching up for the white petals
drifting our thirty arms braiding.

M. Paz Galupo and Jean F. Ayers

Negotiating the Maternal and Sexual Breast

Narratives of Breastfeeding Mothers

> The experience of motherhood is stereotypically characterized as a time of increased emphasis on femininity and nurturance, and a decreased emphasis on women as sexual beings. This shift in the female stereotype for mothers occurs within a larger cultural context in which motherhood is experienced both as an expression of biological potential and as an oppressive institution.
>
> —Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born*

The present study investigates the way in which breastfeeding mothers conceptualize the seemingly competing representations of the breast as both sexual and maternal. Breastfeeding experiences allow a unique context in which to consider how mothers negotiate issues of sexuality. For women who choose to breastfeed, the breast is central to the motherhood experience both biologically and symbolically (Dettwyler, 1995: 177). Breastfeeding, however, is experienced within a larger culture where the breast is considered a public indicator of sexuality (Latteier, 1998: 75; Spadola, 1998: 4). Consideration of the breastfeeding woman's relationship to the breast, then, allows for an understanding of how sexuality and motherhood are negotiated in a physically tangible way in relation to a central and specific body part.

That the sexual and maternal aspects of the breast are in conflict, is understood in light of descriptive data on breastfeeding behavior in the United States. Although the benefits of breastfeeding for both the mother (McTiernan and Thomas. 1986: 358; Newcomb, *et al.*, 1994: 87) and infant/child (Bick, 1999: 319) have been reliably established in the medical and psychological literature, the breastfeeding rates in the U.S. are astonishingly low, especially in comparison with other cultures (Coates, 1998: 3). In 1995, 59.7 percent of

U.S. mothers chose to initiate breastfeeding. Among those that initiated breastfeeding, only 21.6 percent continued beyond six months (Ryan, 1997: 20) despite the American Pediatric Association's recommendation to breastfeed at least a year (1997: 1039). The primacy of the breast as sexual in U.S. culture strongly impacts women's breastfeeding decisions. Concern over the appearance of the breast and modesty are among the reasons given as to why women choose not to begin breastfeeding at all or decide to wean prior to the recommended one-year period (Forrester, Wheelock and Warren, 1997: 35).

The present research allows a discussion of breastfeeding experiences by women who have had extended breastfeeding experiences of at least a year. Women who choose to breastfeed are faced with the challenge of balancing the physical demands of breastfeeding with the multiplicity of roles of motherhood and/or personhood. The tension between sexuality and motherhood is uniquely understood when framed by the breastfeeding narratives and lived experiences of women. From the perspective of breastfeeding women, we offer in this paper an analysis of the relationship between sexuality and motherhood as it is played out on the territory of women's bodies, most specifically the breast.

Method

Women were recruited from posted flyers in public areas, and recruitment statements in local newsletters and newspapers. The recruitment strategy was to sample the diverse experiences of women as announcements appeared in child rearing publications, campus publications, and publications for women's organizations.

Individual interviews were conducted with 30 women with breastfeeding experience. All women included in the study had breastfed for at least one year with the breastfeeding experience occurring within two years of the time of interview. Women ranged in age from 20 to 43 years with a mean age of 34.8 and had between one and four children. Most (but not all) of our participants were married. The majority of our participants were white, with over one third identifying as racial (African American, n=3; Native American, n=1) or ethnic/religious (Jewish, n=7) minorities. Participating women represented a range of educational experiences: ten had completed high school, eight had undergraduate degrees, and 12 had graduate degrees. Quotations from some of the individual women are provided in the following analysis. Individual quotations are denoted with a pseudonym chosen by the participant.

Our research employed a semi-structured interview method. Interviews were conducted by student associates in the participants' home setting. Feedback from participants indicated that this was important to their level of comfort and investment in the project and affected their high level of disclosure. Interviews were tape recorded and the content was later transcribed for off line analysis. Interviews were scheduled during an open-ended session and ranged from 35 minutes to two hours.

Interview questions touched on many aspects of the breastfeeding experi-

ence including breastfeeding history, breastfeeding decision making, models for breastfeeding, technical aspects of breastfeeding, social support, breastfeeding and social roles, perception of adequacy of the breast for feeding, breastfeeding and intimacy, and social/personal empowerment through breastfeeding. Following the interview, participants were sent a follow-up questionnaire. This questionnaire allowed participants to provide additional information regarding their breastfeeding experience and provide feedback about the interview process. There was a 100 percent return rate for the follow-up questionnaire. We present here, an analysis of interview content specific to the dichotomous representation of the breast as sexual and maternal.

Results and discussion

Our analysis focuses on issues related to the sexual/maternal breast. Although our interview questions were designed to stimulate an understanding of a range of breastfeeding topics, it is important to note that issues of the sexual/maternal breast were often discussed throughout the interview and were not only raised by our participants in the context of specific questions on the topic of the sexual breast. For example, even when an interview question focused on a technical nature of breastfeeding (such as latching on or weaning), participants often recast their answers into a discussion that acknowledged a sexual context of the breast (for example, public breast exposure). In addition, there was a general sensitivity in discussing breastfeeding as an experience because of the sexualized nature of the breast. Mothers were forthcoming during the interview, excited to talk about breastfeeding as it is a topic that structures much of their lives, but is often considered taboo in general polite conversation. For our participants the discussion of breastfeeding (as well as the experience of breastfeeding) could not be separated from the dominant social context of the breast as sexual.

The breastfeeding narratives offered by our participants spoke to several issues related to the sexual/maternal breast and were expressed in three broad and sometimes overlapping themes: 1) Breastfeeding Decisions: Implications of the Sexual Breast; 2) Utility of the Breast: Milk Tools and Sex Toys; and 3) Relating to the Maternal Breast: Pathway towards Self-acceptance. A discussion of each theme follows.

Breastfeeding decisions: Implications of the sexual breast

Past research has documented that women who chose not to breastfeed often cite reasons related to the dominant image of the breast as sexual (Forester, 1997: 35). A decision to breastfeed, then, can be seen as a decision to override the competing image of the breast as sexual. Having breastfed for over a year, the women included in our study all demonstrated a strong breastfeeding commitment. Their breastfeeding narratives, however, indicate that they continued to negotiate the boundaries of the sexual/maternal breast on a daily basis. Two issues related to breastfeeding decisions and the sexual

breast were consistently raised by our participants.

In the context of breastfeeding decisions, mothers most commonly spoke of their decision regarding whether or not to breastfeed in the presence of others. It was clear to the breastfeeding women that the simple act of nursing could be interpreted by others as inappropriate due to the sexualized nature of the breast. Some women clearly altered their behavior for the purpose of not offending others, making other people (and themselves) feel more comfortable, to avoid a stressful situation, embarrassment, and/or confrontation. Some chose to breastfeed in secrecy or privacy finding space in bathroom stalls, parked cars, under cover of blankets or a hovering partner. Some chose, simply, to stay home.

> *Six months is when everybody is disapproving of it. I have had problems being in public. I try not to do things in public ... once I hid in the corner of the restaurant.* (Isabelle, age 20)

> *I felt that this was a natural thing. Of course, I wouldn't go out in public without a blanket.* (Sara, age 38)

> *I had to work at being comfortable nursing in public.* (Sylvia, age 37)

Not all of the women were uncomfortable with public nursing. Those who breastfed in public, however, were keenly aware that the act of nursing could be interpreted in a sexual context—one that could elicit both uneasiness or contempt on the part of others. They often described their decision to breastfeed publically as an act of defiance.

> *I felt like. "This is my child. I'm nursing her here. If you have a problem, you leave the room." And that's the way I handled all my situations with nursing. "This is a child that needs to be fed, if I had a bottle in my hand you wouldn't leave the room. I'm not sitting here with my breast hanging out for you."* (Lauren, age 33)

Other participants, like Lisa below, saw public breastfeeding as a way to educate others. Again, the act of breastfeeding took on a larger political meaning.

> *I became almost like an advocate for breastfeeding. I took on any opportunity I had, no matter what the situation. I was breastfeeding so that most people would do a double take because I just figured that was the way to sensitize people to breastfeeding.* (Lisa, age 32)

A second issue regarding breastfeeding decisions emerged in the narratives. Mothers indicated they felt criticized in their decision to breastfeed

beyond infancy, reporting that public disapproval of breastfeeding increased with the age of the infant. They attributed this disapproval to the idea that nursing beyond a certain developmental juncture was sexually questionable based on the idea that either 1) the infant/child was a sexual being; or 2) the mother was deriving sexual pleasure from breastfeeding.

This increasing public disapproval put participants in the role of defending their decision to breastfeed. One participant recalled an instance in which her partner questioned her decision to continue breastfeeding for the benefit of the child. Her response was:

> *I'm going to continue nursing. There's nothing you can do. I'm not going to stop until I feel like I'm ready to stop.* (Sylvia, age 37)

Our participants had initiated breastfeeding (despite the odds) and in doing so had addressed the sexual/maternal breast issue directly. However, negotiating the dual conceptualizations of breast as sexual/maternal did not end at making the decision to breastfeed or even at initiating the breastfeeding experience. This negotiation was played out on a daily basis in tangible and practical ways that structured the lives of our breastfeeding participants. The decision to breastfeed was made not once, instead it was made potentially many times. Each time a participant decided to breastfeed in the presence of others or to continue breastfeeding past each feeding, she subtly expressed a renewed commitment to breastfeeding and a renewed shift to the conceptualization of the breast as maternal.

Utility of the breast: Milk tools and sex toys

Our participants most commonly discussed their breasts in relation to a specific function that they perform. Breasts were either vehicles for milk delivery (food source) or vehicles for delivering sexual pleasure. While our participants acknowledged both possible functions of the breast, these experiences were temporally discrete. That is, at any given moment in time, the breast was primarily seen as either sexual or maternal, but not both.

> *[Breastfeeding] affects how I look at my breasts. I still relate to my breasts as tools of milk. Milk tools. And not as sexual things.* (Liora, age 42)

> *There comes a time where you are emotionally ready, you feel like you are ready for your breasts to be treated like they usually were treated. They are fun toys, instead of the babies' nourishment.* (Bette, age 43)

> *At one time they're food and another time, they're toys for someone. I didn't have a problem with that.* (Karen, age 29)

Central to the discussion of the utility of the breast is the notion that the

breast functions for a purpose outside of the woman herself. That is, breasts are objects that are manipulated by others, made available to others, and are ultimately defined by others. Whether breasts were viewed as "milk tools" or "sex toys" was dependent upon who was acting upon the breast at a given time, either the infant/child or the sexual partner respectively. For our breastfeeding mothers, the breast fulfilled a purpose outside of the individual woman's body. Even in the context of sexual behavior, breasts were primarily discussed by our participants as a body part acted upon by the partner, delivering pleasure to the partner, or attracting sexual interest. Rarely did our participants discuss deriving their own sexual pleasure in relation to stimulation of (or display of) the breast. This is consistent with cultural norms which establish women as sexual objects, but not necessarily as sexual beings.

Although the breastfeeding narratives indicated that women saw their breasts primarily as functioning outside of themselves, they did not express concern over this. They discussed their breasts in these contexts in a matter-of-fact manner, without much complaint. The sexual/maternal roles of the breast seem to be conceptualized as a logical extension of the accepted roles in their lives—as partner/woman and as mother.

The sexual/maternal dichotomy of the breast was heightened for our participants by the breastfeeding experience. Many indicated that prior to breastfeeding they related to their breasts in the usual, sexual way. The sexual breast was seen as the default. Breastfeeding behavior, however, forced an alternative interpretation of the breast as maternal. Women responded to this conceptual switch by making specific behavioral and cognitive changes. As a corollary to the breastfeeding experience (which includes a shift to the understanding of the breast as maternal) our participants reported a general decline of sexual desire, irritability in having their breasts touched sexually, and difficulty in viewing themselves as sexual. As long as their breasts served the maternal and biological function of feeding, the sexual nature of the breast was diminished for our participants. In response to a question regarding whether breastfeeding affected her sense of sexual self, Elizabeth says:

> *It was difficult to be physical with my husband when I was nursing. I didn't see myself, or feel sexual. You can't go to bed with these (breasts) you know. ... You wait nine months to wear something sexy, but you gotta watch it because you know your breast might leak over the little nightgown or something. Your breasts don't let you forget that you're a mother.* (Elizabeth, age 34)

Other women interviewed expressed a similar view:

> *I really did not want my husband anywhere near my breasts.... When I was nursing, they are totally not a sexual thing anymore. It's just what you feed the baby with.* (Stacey, age 30)

> *It changes the way that you feel about your breasts in a sexual way. They feel differently in the time that you're nursing.* (Robin, age 40)

> *I mean, I relate to my breasts so much as these breastfeeding tools so that it is like they are there and I am using them for this purpose, which feels much less intimate than the way that my body used to feel. I do feel like this is part of my body that belongs to my children more than it belongs to me.* (Liora, age 42)

Although these changes in sexual behavior occurred in concert with a shift away from a sexual representation of the breast, our participants acknowledged that this shift was a temporary one and a concession that they were willing to make in order to realize the benefits of breastfeeding:

> *I feel that it (breastfeeding) is something we can work around. You know, there are different times when the baby is asleep. And you know it's not forever.* (Isabelle, age 20)

> *There are other things you can do to be sexually intimate (besides breast stimulation). You do other things. And you realize that this too shall pass. I mean, life is long.* (Bette, age 43)

Participants also noted that although they experienced a change in the way they related to their breasts as sexual, their relationship quality did not suffer as a result. Most indicated that their partners understood the shift in their sexual relationship and were supportive of their breastfeeding in general.

Relating to the maternal breast: Pathway towards self-acceptance

During breastfeeding, mothers showed a clear shift in the way they related to their breasts—away from the culturally dominant image of the sexual breast toward a maternal breast fulfilling the biological function of feeding. This conceptual shift stimulated self-reflection for our breastfeeding mothers. Many women reported that with the breastfeeding experience they came to a new understanding of themselves in the form of increased self-acceptance and self-esteem. Sometimes this came as a result of the physical changes and appearance of their breasts. Theresa's comments below mirror several of our participants' in welcoming the increased size of their breasts associated with breastfeeding.

> *I felt better about my breasts while I was breastfeeding. I was happy to actually have boobs. It was kind of disappointing when I stopped.* (Theresa, age 38)

Many women whose breast size did not previously match the culturally

idealized (large) sexualized breast expressed that their larger breasts during breastfeeding made them feel more "womanly." In other cases, the shift towards a maternal breast allowed women to focus less on the sexualized aspects of their breasts and feel happy about their breasts as fulfilling an important function.

> *I've always had really large breasts and I've always been a little bit self conscious about them. But the breastfeeding experience made me feel like they're there for a purpose. And I feel better about them.* (Linda, age 40)

> *Breastfeeding redeemed having breasts to begin with.* (Sara, age 38)

This shift from sexual to maternal breast seemed to reflect a larger shift in thinking about women's identity in general. Our participants' comments reflected an overall shift in perspective from being sexually objectified as a woman, to serving a valued function as mother. Breastfeeding, in some ways, liberated these women from the sexualized way in which they are primarily regarded in larger culture. As a result, participants reported a perception of higher self-esteem, competency, and accomplishment.

> *The whole process of pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding opens up a whole new perception of yourself. I felt like it went so successfully, I feel like my self esteem went up.* (Delia, age 35)

> *The whole process of pregnancy made me feel like there were things that my body did that I never realized I could do. It gave me such a sense of "Wow, the wonders of my body!" Then when I nursed, it was just a wonderful feeling to be able to provide nourishment for your child and it's like the next natural step from pregnancy and delivering this child. The next natural step is providing nourishment for them.* (Sylvia, age 37)

> *You are doing such a great thing in doing this—you are feeding the child. It comes from your body. It's a cool thing. It's a liquid that comes out of your body that you don't mind passing ... "Hey, I can give milk out, and that's not such a bad thing" ... you feel like your child would not live without your breastmilk. That's kind of a cool thing ... and it empowered me in that sense.* (Lauren, age 33)

Many women expressed that their breastfeeding was important to their experience as a parent. Breastfeeding, for them, was central to the way they identified as mothers and the way in which they distinguished motherhood from parenthood. This shift away from the sexualized breast allowed them to clearly define themselves as mothers—as female parents who were uniquely situated to provide for their children. The women we interviewed stressed that this was one area in their lives (in some cases they only area) in which they were

the experts. All of the women indicated their sole responsibility in deciding to breastfeed. While their situations varied in terms of the outside support that they received, they all made the decision to breastfeed on their own. Likewise, the decision to continue to breastfeed, sometimes after initial social support wavered, was theirs to make. The decision to continue to breastfeed seemed to reaffirm our participants' status as mother/woman on a daily basis and grant them control over an important aspect of their lives.

Summary and conclusions

Throughout our participants' breastfeeding narratives the sexual/maternal breast was clearly a point of negotiation—one which impacted decision making for both public breastfeeding and the continuation of breastfeeding past infancy. It was clear that breastfeeding mothers negotiated the sexual/maternal breast on a daily basis and the decision to breastfeed was made not once, but was made potentially many times. Each time a woman decided to breastfeed in the presence of others or to continue breastfeeding past each feeding, she subtly expressed a renewed commitment to breastfeeding and a renewed shift to the conceptualization of the breast as maternal.

Central to the negotiation between the sexual/maternal breast was the way in which women related to the breast based on its immediate function. The breast was conceptualized by our participants in terms of its utility outside of the woman's body rendering the breast as either a "milk tool" or a "sex toy." During breastfeeding, women related to their breasts primarily as the former allowing a shift away from the limitations of the sexualized breast. Women reported higher self-esteem and perceived self-competency when they related to their breasts outside of the culturally defined sexual breast. The stories offered here provide a unique model for understanding the larger issue of how women negotiate issues of sexuality and motherhood. Our breastfeeding narratives speak to the physically tangible way sexuality and motherhood is played out on the territory of women's bodies.

In interpreting the results of this study, it is important to note that the experiences of the women in our study represent a minority experience of U.S. mothers, many of whom do not choose to initiate breastfeeding, and a smaller proportion that actually continue to breastfeed for a duration of a year. Our results, however, point to an important potential benefit for women who choose to breastfeed. One theme consistently raised among our breastfeeding mothers was their attribution that the breastfeeding experience allowed an increase in self-acceptance and self-esteem. This was often an unexpected benefit that had a significant impact on the way in which they conceptualized their motherhood experiences. The importance of these findings can be understood when discussed in the context of Van Esterik's (1994: 41) notion of breastfeeding as a feminist issue—one which empowers women and challenges the view of the breast as primarily a sex object. Breastfeeding certainly functioned in this way for our participants. However, it is important to note that

while many women did express an experience of empowerment with breastfeeding—as a group they did not consistently conceptualize it in feminist terms. The tendency to conceptualize the breast in maternal terms, however, was an important shift away from the limitation of the sexualized breast (and by extension from the limited way in which women are regarded in largely sexual terms). Although individual women may not experience breastfeeding in a feminist context, the relationship between empowerment for individual women through breastfeeding and the status of women in general is clear (Van Esterik, 1995: 158).

Our breastfeeding narratives present a model for exploring larger issues of sexuality and motherhood. Lewin (1993:10) discusses motherhood as an effective strategy for women in dealing with their oppressed status in society. Motherhood presents as an accepted societal path in which women can experience a relative degree of privilege. In the breastfeeding narratives described here, this concept of a motherhood strategy seems fitting. Our participants experienced increased self-competency and gained recognition for a task in which they were the unqualified experts. Through their breastfeeding experiences they gained an aspect of control in their lives that is not readily available to women in U.S. society. This unique and specific mothering behavior required a re-conceptualization of the function of the breast, which in many ways represented a re-conceptualization of self to include an identity as mother.

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Rishma Dunlop

Berceuse

for Rachel

Her easy smile
is everpresent
on her child-woman's
face.

I drift back
through the ebb of time,
rocking the cradle,
smooth pine against my thigh.
Her eyes,
shining black crystals,
incandescent truths
loomed across the
white silence
of moonlit nursery.

I give her
to the tidal pulls
of sleep and dreams,
my hand cupped beneath her heart,
wondering at her
seamlessness,
searching
for the blue-skinned
grips
of iron hands
in the tearing out.

Renee Norman

Last Supper

every evening he arrives for dinner
greets his daughters
asks about their day
on Sunday the meal is roast beef and potatoes
filling their stomachs
with rich gravy that slides them into next week

every evening he leaves after dinner
it's been 5 years since he announced
he would not stay
the fight about the recreation vehicle
the dynamite that blew apart
a half-demolished household
leaving a newborn rocking in the quake

even the neighbours haven't noticed his daily exodus
wonderful smells of lasagna and baked bread
still wafting through the cracks in the house
her hands kneading dough to kill the pain
the noodles neatly arranged between the layers
of sauce and cheese and children

tomorrow she'll barbecue hamburgers on the grill
wave to anyone she sees from the yard
prepare the evening meal for her family
pretend he is so busy at work
doesn't like to barbecue
can't predict his hours

when the red meat smokes and changes color
she'll see the placenta from the baby's birth
burst and splatter him with blood
she'll see stars from explosions
as if she were hit hard on the head

Petra Büskens

From Perfect Housewife to Fishnet Stockings and Not Quite Back Again

One Mother's Story of Leaving Home

First acquaintance: meeting Lillith.

Lillith is a gregarious yet softly spoken woman whose energy and enthusiasm belie her 70 years of living. She defies every imaginable stereotype I hold of an older person, let alone an older woman. She is active, articulate, and strong (I see her gym equipment in the corner of the room); she is opinionated and, to my complete astonishment, she is *sexy*. I notice that her eyes sparkle blue every time she throws her head back to laugh with an irresistible combination of wisdom and freedom. I have to admit it, this woman is utterly compelling.

Lillith is, however, a mother who has left her children and it is for this reason that I have come to interview her. I just never expected to encounter such a powerful, centred and sensuous woman. I am caught off guard with a reprimanding conscience (asking myself why I assumed an older woman wouldn't possess any or all of Lillith's traits) and seduced by the novelty of one who does. I am enamoured with the gift of Lillith's story and I am humanized by her extraordinariness. When I walk out of Lillith's tiny Tuscon cottage at the end of our interview I feel like a different person; I feel like I have glimpsed the future—maybe it is myself as an older woman.

Like the other 15 women I have thus far interviewed, Lillith found her conventional role in the family—a 1950s suburban Australian family—a stultifying one. She felt trapped, confined, dependent, exploited, unrealized and, ultimately, abused. Like the others, she too decided that conventional marriage and motherhood were unsustainable for her. Not content to accept her "lot," Lillith took a highly transgressive path and chose to leave her family: both husband and children. While this is the route most men take after the dissolution of a marriage, it is certainly not an avenue many women consider.

The stigmatisation is simply too great. While we see statistics bursting at the seems with divorce, its main side effect remains that ever expanding category demographers call the "Mother Headed Household"(ABS, 2000; ABS, 1999[a]).[1] But how does the family change when it is the mother who leaves and not the father? More specifically, what happens to motherhood when it occurs outside the conventional nuclear or single-parent family? What happens to a mother who has left home?

I am interested to answer this question since it has remained largely unexplored in the feminist literature on motherhood, notwithstanding the new focus on "impossibility" (DiQuinzio, 1999) "contradiction" (Hayes, 1996) "ambivalence" (Hollway and Featherstone, 1997) and "deviance" (Ladd-Taylor and Umansky, 1998). From this research, among many others, we know mothers are struggling with the contradictory models of unencumbered individualism and self-sacrificing motherhood. What we know less of is how mothers are subverting and recreating this script. Thus while I accept the analyses offered by contemporary maternal theorists, my interest is, rather, to locate an instance of creative subversion. Methodologically, the focus shifts from oppression to resistance. I read the mother who leaves as a potent and challenging instance of precisely this kind of subversion and reinvention.

My empirical research[2] thus gathered the stories of fifteen women who identified as mothers who had left. These women selected themselves on the basis of advertisements placed in local newspapers. It was a requirement of the research that mothers perceived they had voluntarily left for a period of six months or more (thereby excluding issues pertaining to adoption or refuge status). Participants were interviewed for a period of approximately two hours in their own homes on two occasions. Interviews were tape recorded, transcribed and checked by participants before final inclusion in the project. Pseudonyms have been used through-out.

This paper will therefore cluster around the pivotal question: what happens when mother leaves home, with a particular emphasis on maternal sexuality. I claim no generalizability from these findings given that I am centering my analysis on the data gathered from only 15 cases, with Lillith as my paradigmatic example. This is merely an attempt to raise issues and provoke thoughts on the quiet reinvention of maternity enacted by this small group of Australian mothers who have left their families.

Madonna and whore or Lillith as mother and woman.

At the close of one of our interviews Lillith presents me with an anecdote which assures me of her peculiar relationship to motherhood. Her story is designed to elicit a contrast between herself and other presumably "good" mothers, yet her self imposed exclusion finds it's root (no pun intended) in her sexuality, more precisely in her refusal to ascend to the restrictions of conjugal monogamy. Lillith invokes a familiar dualism and positions herself firmly to its right; she is the whore, not the Madonna. She recounts:

> *Yeah, it would have been in the '60s, 1965/66, I was shopping at the local grocery shop. I'd thrown over this very bright sleeveless thing I put over my swimsuit, or over nothing, probably I'd taken my swimsuit off and didn't have anything on [underneath]. And I remember eyeing this guy off in the grocery shop and he was an actor because channel 4 was up there at that time, and we ended up going to channel 4 and making love on the floor of the studio. And then I got my groceries [she says still laughing] and went home again. I mean I drove up there, I had the car, and I got in my car, came home again and unpacked the groceries.* So I never felt like a mother, ever. [my emphasis]

This is the stuff that movies are made of so it seems fitting that Lillith's adventure would take place with an actor, whom she recalls later in fits of laughter was "revolting, absolutely revolting." This example is entertaining to listen to, and no doubt to deliver, but beyond this I think it tells us something fairly fundamental about motherhood itself; about the heterosexual monogamy implied in the term mother and about our intuitive, albeit ideological, sense that a good mother doesn't "fuck around." We assume mothers are prudent, tamed creatures who selflessly and, most importantly, *platonically* love others. This shared insight comes from the unspoken well-spring of common sense, or, following Gramsci (1971), what social theorists somewhat dryly refer to as "ideological hegemony." By this account, common sense is the process whereby consensus is achieved between dominant and subordinate groups in favour of the former. In western societies, we are structured by a dominant belief system promulgating an equation between maternity and selfless (or is that sexless?), devotion. (See, for example, Warner, 1976) This has a long history in religion, culture and art, while today it is preserved in the dual and interconnected institutions of marriage and motherhood. Maternity in this ideological context is inherently desexualizing. Lillith is herself bound by this commonsensical dualism as she explains her alienation from the institution of motherhood on the grounds of her libertine sexuality. That is, she views herself as an outlaw to motherhood *because* of her sexual adventurousness.

I would like to explore this dichotomy further and ultimately watch it implode as Lillith's story unfolds; because it seems to me that by leaving the family, Lillith manages, after all the pain and destruction, to innovatively synthesise "madonna" and "whore," or, in other words, I believe Lillith finds a novel way of being both a caregiver and a free agent. My reading suggests Lillith exhausts the dialectical hegemony of asexual maternity/sexualised freedom by altering the terms and spaces from which she mothers. In this way she repositions the whore within the madonna, or the woman within the mother, by finding an insulated geographic location for both. She insists on a simultaneity of her identifications (madonna and whore; freeagent and caregiver) whilst prising apart the spaces within which she enacts these different facets of her self. By leaving the familial home, Lillith opens up the space to be

something other than a mother; she quite literally has not merely a room of her own as Virginia Woolf suggested, but rather, a *home* of her own (Woolf, 1929). From this vantage point, Lillith can exercise her autonomy and she can, as she eventually does, mother from here too. Leaving, then, can be understood as one way of effectively resisting the totalising institution of self sacrificing/desexualising mothering, however much the stigma "bad mother" attaches itself to her actions. Indeed, we should use the intensity of the stigma as an index of the hegemony of institutionalised patriarchal motherhood. The fact that a mother who leaves is judged very differently from a father who leaves stands as a chilling reminder of the double-standard inherent in "parenting;" it stands as a reminder of the ideology of maternal self-sacrifice, and it neatly dovetails with the sexual double standard which calls a sexually adventurous woman a slut while a man who acts in this same way is a hero and a Don Juan. It is this double standard that Lillith pushes against first through her infidelities and then most powerfully through her leaving. Let us explore the particularities of her situation.

The ambivalence of feminine mystique

"This was the '50s." Lillith reminds me, "it was a time when you had to be the prefect wife and perfect mother.... And so I was absolutely perfect. I mean I was such a bloody martyr. You've got no idea ... I was so perfect and fiercely protective of the children." While Lillith lived up to this ideal for a brief time she also resented the constraints it imposed on her life. Thus she tells me in almost the same breath how "bovine" she felt after giving birth to three children in quick succession. "I felt like a cow ... always pregnant, always feeding for years and years and years.... I felt trapped [and] suffocated, [like] the children were albatrosses around my neck.... I also felt that I'd been sucked dry, that my youth had been taken and quite resentful ... and the juxtaposition with that, of course, was this sort of fierce love." Lillith's ambivalence is honestly revealed in her struggle to come to terms with the dual and contradictory experience of caring for children under the hegemony of selfless/sexless mothering. It is a familiar account that most mothers feel but few will admit (Mousehart, 1997; LeBlanc, 1998). The constraints of isolated mothering place an impossible and historically unprecedented burden on modern mothers: one that sequesters them to the home and isolates them from others. As Lillith found, the need (and later the desire) to work did not change this basic structure of unequal parental demand.

For years she felt like the only available parent for her children and the strain wore at her. She says, "it was very difficult because I was both father and mother. I mean Adam was absent." Inspite of this uneven strain, Lillith worked in "odd jobs" and eventually developed a career in market research during her children's middle school years. She was reasonably successful with this and it opened up important avenues for self-expression, financial independence, and autonomy (not to mention the odd "lifesaving" affair). However, it also

increased the pressures at home as Adam refused to share the load of domestic and childcare labour. Lillith says, "I mean he said that if I worked he would never pick up a tea-towel. So he did nothing, absolutely nothing. I felt very put upon." Lillith's experience is supported by sociological research, albeit more recent findings, indicating that women's entry into the workplace has not been accompanied by a corresponding movement of men's work in the home (Baxter, 1993; Bittman, 1995, Bttman and Pixley, 1997; Dempsey, 1997). This remains the case to varying degrees in all of the advanced capitalist countries (Pleck, 1985; Sanchez, 1994; Shelton, 1990; Steil, 1997; Zhang and Farley, 1995). In her classic study, *The Second Shift* Arlie Hochschild (1989) argues that the revolution of women out of the home and into the workforce has not been met with a parallel "revolution" of men entering the home and sharing the domestic load. This has amounted to a terrible burden for mothers who are now very often working two shifts: one at their paid job and then a second when they return home in the evening to find cooking, washing, shopping, cleaning and the less savoury aspects of parenting awaiting them. This pattern was certainly the case in Lillith's home.

Thus Lillith and Adam's marriage became more and more acrimonious escalating, in the end, to physical violence. Adam began beating Lillith very badly, sometimes in front of the children who were now in and approaching high school. This situation worsened finally leading to Lillith's hospitalisation from a particularly severe beating and her subsequent suicide attempt. "Overdosing was the only way I felt I could leave" she recalls. Lillith's perceived inability to escape this situation and her protective tie to her children became a source of profound resentment.

> *I felt if I didn't have the children I could have gone. I'd felt that for years. If the children weren't there, I would have left the marriage ... there was nowhere I could have taken the children.... And I don't think I wanted them.... I wanted out of motherhood and out of marriage.*

Lillith clarifies the angst in this decision further,

> *I felt I was responsible for giving them stability in this dreadful marriage..... I felt as though I had no [rights]. I felt as though I wasn't even a person. You know ... it's a bit like mushrooms growing out of a dead person or something, you know? Like when I'm thinking of it now ... there's a carcass rotting and the other life forms grow up out of it. I felt like a rotting carcass and that's when I left. And it was dreadful. It was wonderful.*

Lillith refers to her leaving as a "rebirth" where she guiltily sought a freedom beyond the painful limits of her violent marriage and the selfless monotony of child care. It would be tempting to think it was only Lillith's marriage that she was leaving and keep intact our image of an otherwise devoted

mother, but in fact Lillith stresses several times that it was *both* husband and children she wanted to leave. It was in fact the problematic nexus of these two roles: wife and mother with their seemingly intractable stranglehold over her life, that Lillith wanted to escape. The one cannot be extricated successfully from the other for this is part of the institution of both (Rich, 1977; Johnson, 1988). Marriage equals motherhood and motherhood equals marriage. The disarticulation of one from the other immediately implies transgression, such is the ideology of femininity. For Lillith her freedom meant the withdrawal from both sides of the wife/mother coin. While initially Lillith frames her desire to leave the children in terms of the pragmatic difficulties of single parenting in the nineteen-sixties, she later qualifies this position by saying she didn't, "want them either." This is the point at which Lillith relinquishes not simply her children but also her socially sanctioned status of mother. It is a courageous act of destruction that will earn her a lifelong stigma. She says,

> *And I never thought of what was going to happen after. Never thought. It was just* ... relief *that I didn't have them and I didn't want responsibility for them.... I mean because honestly I didn't give a stuff. I mean I* did, *I did.*

The morning after: Trading in love and resentment for guilt and freedom

Lillith reminded me that her claim to normal motherhood was merely a veneer. She was, afterall, having clandestine affairs throughout the final turbulent years of her marriage. She claims this was the only time she felt "herself," a brief moment when she was—however superficially—appreciated and admired; but, perhaps more fundamentally, this was a moment when she could access that part of her which was *not* a wife or a mother. This was a part of her self Lillith craved to discover and cultivate. It was the self her familial role denied her and it was the self she pursued more ardently than any extra-marital affair. Indeed, it is likely that her relationship with her won freedom was the most subversive affair of all. This association between freedom and sexuality is made explicitly by Lillith who saw her leaving as simultaneously the loss of familial constraint as well as the acquisition of sexual autonomy. For Lillith this meant the return to a "lost youth" she felt had been "sucked dry." She says,

> *Look, I felt 16 years of age. It was the most wonderful feeling.... I mean, I was in my mid-30s to late 30s, but I would leap up on a street seat and run along the top of it. And I had a lover who was much younger than me and* we weren't living together *and just the freedom. It was exquisite. Absolutely exquisite ... [It was] this wonderful, wonderful going back to my teenage years. Just being so wild and being able to get drunk and go to the pub every night. Oh God, it was so wonderful. [I'd go] dancing at the ... and I'd look around to see if my daughter was there [first] ... [at] the "Stamping Sam" a disco, and wear short skirts, you know mini skirts and*

> *net stockings. I was totally ... you know I didn't have kids. I didn't have to ... I didn't have to be a mother. And I was no longer somebody's wife or somebody's mother ... I was no longer that. I was me ... I was my own identity. Not having these encumbrances, you know, these anchors anymore. It was the most wonderful, wonderful freedom ... so for the first time I stood alone. I'd always been my father's daughter, my husband's wife, my children's mother, my sister's sister, my mother's daughter. For the first time I was me, with a career, and just me.* [my emphasis]

This freedom obviously set alarm bells off in the heads of her male acquaintances who (also) construed her new freedom in explicitly sexual terms. She says at a different point in the interview,

> *Wives didn't leave children. If wives left, they went and lived with mum and took their children with them. And that was really bad. Wives did not leave. This was a terrible, terrible thing I did. Like Adam's friends, because of the work, they found out where I was, would ring me up and want to fuck me. I was a mother ... and then ... became a sexual being. My step-father, my brother-in-law ... and my husband's Lion's Club friends ... all rang me up and wanted to fuck me. I mean it was disgusting.*

The madonna/whore dichotomy had not ceased to wield it's influence in Lillith's life, now she was simply out on the "wrong" side of the equation. While Lillith's liberation from the familial role opened up new vistas for her autonomy and sexuality, it was also read as a clear sign of her sexual wantonness; her "loose" morals and carefree attitude. In other words, in a culture dominated by the ideological hegemony of selfless/sexless maternity, for a mother to act freely was and is read as sexual provocation *in itself*. A free woman is a "come on" partly becomes she personifies taboo, partly because she is perceived as "rebellious" or "feisty," and partly because it is assumed—rightly or wrongly—that she *doesn't have a man* (and presumably wants, needs or should have one). Culture at large finds it hard to cope with autonomy in a woman, even harder to cope with sexual autonomy in a woman and hardest of all to cope with sexual autonomy in a woman who is also a mother (Dinnerstein, 1976).

Lillith is right, then, the autonomy she wrestled from her family, was necessarily sexual and sexualising. There are two sides to this, however, which directly correlate to, on the one hand, Lillith's sense of liberation and awakening, and on the other hand, the objectification she encountered from the men in her husband's Lion's Club. These two poles are, it seems to me, interconnected phenomena; different ways of living, resisting and consolidating the hegemony of the selfless-sexless/selfish-sexual dichotomy. For Lillith, however, the simultaneous insistence on a sexed identity *as a mother* was a means to push past the limitations of the dualism. She sought to make synchronous claims on both sexuality and maternity thereby collapsing the dualism itself.

Whereas the men in the Lion's club simplistically read Lillith's departure as indication of her "free" (i.e., sexually "loose") attitude, Lillith had herself insisted on something far more complex. But before she could reach this level of complexity she had first to annihilate her former role. This took place, in the first instance, through an intense reclamation of freedom.

"So, yes" she says, "it was a great relief to be a sexual *being* when I left." In keeping with this newfound sexual identity, Lillith took up with a man ten years her junior. This was a highly charged and immensely enjoyable relationship for her. She recounts in bursts of laughter,

> *So I formed a relationship with him and although* he didn't officially live with me *he stayed several nights.... I mean the sex was amazing, we'd have sex before we went to work, we'd have sex as soon as we got home from work and ... I don't know how many times a day we'd hop into bed [laughing]. We'd be all dressed up ready to go to work and... we'd fall back into bed again. So ... it was very exciting.* [my own emphasis]

The hedonism and spontaneity of this relationship coupled with her new sense of personal mastery dramatically improved Lillith's quality of life. "It was the joyfulness of life when I'd left them" she says, "I got that back and I'd lost that ... being joyful in life." She elaborates more generally,

> *And just to be able to knock off work and have a beer, you know? I mean the things you can't do when you've got children. Or you couldn't do when I had children then anyway. You know I had to go home and cook meals. Now it didn't matter a stuff whether I cooked a meal, whether I had sardines on toast.... I didn't have to cook for anybody, I didn't have to wash for anybody, I didn't have to listen to bloody homework, I didn't have to take ... listen ... you know, cheer them on at swimming. It was just marvellous, it was just wonderful.... I really like to be in control of my own life and that was the first time that I've ever been in control of my own life.*

When I asked Lillith why she had become a sexual being again (in the hope of getting closer to the now ubiquitous equation between freedom and sex) I met with the same equation: "Because I was free" she said. Lillith, it seems, was sexual because she was free and free because she was sexual. It was a circular logic with no external referents. It seems, therefore, that loosening the strictures of mothering, literally leaving home, was not merely a bold, unconventional or destructive act, it was a *sexual* act. Lillith had acted sexually in her own account and, somewhat differently, in the account she provides of those lecherous hopefuls at her husband's Lion's Club. As with the equation between maternity and selfless/sexless subjectivity, relinquishing conventional maternity similarly equated with selfish/sexual subjectivity. Lillith feels this to be true insofar as she genuinely indulged and expanded her sexual horizons, yet she was

also resistant of, and even a little perplexed by, her sexualisation by outsiders. It is an interesting contradiction at the heart of her story and possibly one she cannot avoid until she has returned to the problem of her mothering.

Thus after several months, the constant worry for and guilt over the children forced Lillith to return to her painful past and find more sustainable and personally satisfying solutions. To break out was one part, but reconstruction was the other, arguably more important task she still faced.

What about the children?

Lillith found that her guilt over the children who were now being taken care of by a combination of their oftentimes violent father and her own mother, was too great. While she cherished her new found freedom and the worlds it simultaneously opened and closed, Lillith found her feelings of responsibility for the children pushing through the exuberance. Again, this process was not straightforward as she found she was bedeviled with the same ambivalence characteristic of earlier phases in her mothering. For example, Lillith spent many months of those 12 without her children, staving off memories and images of them. "And so I was a workaholic" she says. "It was very easy to forget my children when I was at work." More confrontingly, at another point in our interview, she recalls the following,

> *So I distanced myself from them that year. I really did not know/want to know about them. Look if a big box had've swallowed them up I would have been pleased at that stage. That's how I felt. I didn't even want to have them as part of my life.*

There is an almost complete absence of maternal sentimentality in Lillith's account. Indeed, it is so transgressive as to be jarring, even on my sympathetic ears. She is clear, almost trenchant, about the fact that she had nothing left, no "inner core" as she puts it, from which to care for her children, or anyone else for that matter. But the ambivalence remained for she also felt a debilitating guilt. She says,

> *I didn't care.... I really didn't care. But mixed up in that was this dreadful, dreadful guilt and I mean that's dogged me all my life. It's shocking guilt. I mean women didn't do these sort of things.... I still had the freedom even though ... I was really guilty about the children, but I didn't want to even know about them.*

Nevertheless, her conscience prevailed and so at the end of her 12 months of being a childfree *sexed* mother, Lillith organized for her daughter, who was the eldest and then, at age 16 exempt from a custody dispute, to come and live with her. Anne's choice was to live with her mother and so it was. However, the two boys would remain with their father a little longer. As younger teenagers,

Lillith would have to apply for legal custody. Adam refused to let them go notwithstanding the boys' requests to live with their mother. Lillith took her case to court and was awarded custody of both boys. While her leaving was looked upon unfavourably, the combination of her admirable employment record with a reputable firm and Adam's failure to show up in court, determined her success. She recalls, however, having to carefully suppress information regarding her lovers, lest this render her ineligible for custody. Moving into a middle-class suburb and renting a cheap home from a friend, Lillith again set up house with her children. This time, however, her mothering changed.

Reclaiming motherhood: Trading in apron strings for equality

Like other stages in her mothering, Lillith found this one difficult also. It meant relinquishing some of the freedom she had grown accustomed to and it meant managing teenagers. This was not always easy and she found the guilt over her year apart initially clouded her sense of fairness. For a brief time she tried to "make it up" to the kids by resuming a martyr-like position in relation to them. She did all the housework, tolerated extreme rudeness from her middle son, and expected little from them in return for her care and provision. Having tasted another kind of life though, her martyrdom was short-lived. After a weekend away in deep reflection, Lillith decided to reorganize her household along lines more conducive to her own sense of self and quality of life. She now expected her near adult children to look after themselves to a much greater degree. She recounts a particularly dramatic anecdote to illustrate her point,

> *And I remember once when Graham didn't wash his dishes, I got all the dishes he was supposed to wash, I got everything: pots, pans, everything that was dirty, I put it in his bed and I put the doona over the top. So I think after that we probably had a more—I don't mean a list up on the fridge, I don't think I've ever done that—but more sharing of household chores.*

Lillith encouraged her daughter to take up an opportunity to live in the nurses quarters and later also encouraged her sons to venture out, taking jobs in distant states and pursuing relationships elsewhere. Her household became a transitory space for her teenage children, one they could return to and live in, but not one for where they could expect domestic service. The expectation was one of equals living in a house cooperatively together. Lillith clarifies her feelings poignantly,

> *I never wanted children on apron strings. I never wanted that role ever. I felt that having children forced that role on me that I never wanted... [So] I didn't want to be "Mother" any longer. I didn't want to be a mother, I wanted to share a house with responsible adults who ... shared the living and contributed to it.*

In view of this return to mothering, it is my contention that Lillith *did not leave her children, rather she left the hegemonic institution of mothering* which dictates that women relinquish their autonomy for the sake of familial others. Lillith creatively challenged this system, and the madonna/whore dualism inherent within it, by *actively breaking and ultimately reinventing her familial role*. This kind of trajectory is remarkably similar for the other eleven women I have thus far interviewed. Contrary to what I expected when I commenced my research on "mothers who leave," I have discovered that every woman has returned to mothering some or all of her children after an initial period of separation. Most, however, tend to combine what becomes part-time mothering with the children's father who is then, by necessity, drawn into a much more active parental role. Paradoxically, these mothers tend to be able share their children with male co-parents much more effectively as part-time single parents than was the case when they cohabited in marital relationships. This suggests that "leaving" is, rather, a *strategic process of withdrawal on the mother's behalf geared to disrupt and reorganize the terms on which conventional parenting is organized.*

Given that both the gendered division of labour and the hegemony of ideologies equating maternity with a selfless-sexless subjectivity prove especially resistant to change, leaving as a mother may be one of the few avenues open to women to disrupt these profound gender inequalities. Having a "home of one's own" simultaneously forces fathers to parent (in the broad sense of this term to include all the time consuming organizational tasks as well as the messy ones) and provides mothers with an insulated time-space for the production and cultivation of autonomy. It is my contention, therefore, that Lillith, as with the other women in my project, reinvented mothering along lines more conducive to the acquisition and propagation of autonomy whilst also eliciting, however reluctantly, much more active parenting from their former spouses. Moreover, by seeking to synthesise caregiving with autonomy, mothers who leave also present a noteworthy challenge to the individualism often associated with modern male subjectivity. Given the significant increase in recent years of mothers leaving in Anglo-American countries (Greif, 1997; Jackson, 1994; ABS,1999[b]),[3]this might very well be a quiet revolution in process.

[1]Current figures in Australia show that almost one in two marriages now end in divorce. (ABS: 2000) However, consistent with the gendered division of labour inside the home, figures show that 88 per cent of lone-parent families are headed by women. (McDonald, 1995: 22). It transpires that single mothers share the care of their children with the father in only 3 per cent of cases. (ABS, 1999[a]) Moreover, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, "One-parent families are projected to increase from about 742,000 in 1996 to about 1.1 million in 2021, comprising 16 percent of all families" (ABS, 2001). In an interesting reverse of the aformentioned trends, however, single father families

are projected to increase more rapidly than single mother families (ABS, 1999[b]).

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[3]In a recent article on "noncustodial mothers" in the United States, Geoffrey Greif suggests that their number is now "close to three million." He writes further that "we see no sign that this trend will reverse itself" (Greif, 1997: 46). Based on figures from the early ninetes, Rosie Jackson also suggests that 15 per cent of mothers in Britain, about 150,000 women, are living away from their children (Jackson, 1994: 17). All data rely primarily on statistics pertaining to lone fathers. However, due to the trend of rapid repartnering amongst single fathers, figures were adjusted upwards. Australian Bureau of Statistics data support these findings indicating that the absolute number of lone fathers increased by 58 percent in the period 1989 to 1998 (ABS, 1999[b]).

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Jennifer A. Reich

Maternal Sin and Salvation

Child Protective Services and the Policing of Mothers' Sexual Behavior

In the U.S., child protective services (CPS), a large welfare bureaucracy run on a county level, is empowered to investigate allegations of child abuse and neglect and to determine whether a child can safely remain in the home or must be removed. Over three million children in the U.S. each year are reportedly abused or neglected with over one million of those reports substantiated (Peddle and Wang). Once an allegation has been substantiated, a case is opened and children will either be removed from their homes or remain home with surveillance by social workers. At this point, the family—usually female headed—ceases to be private and gives way to unprecedented levels of public scrutiny. Should parents wish to regain custody of their children, the dependency court will attempt to reform the parents through the provision of services such as drug testing or treatment, counseling, anger management, parenting classes, or housing referrals. Parental behavior will be monitored by a social worker who is expected to coordinate services and to report the details of parental behavior and levels of compliance to the court. Yet becoming an appropriate mother in the eyes of the state requires more than compliance with services. Mothers must demonstrate their commitment to mothering and to their relationship with their children above all other relationships. A mother's willingness to forego sexual relationships with men will immeasurably influence whether or not she is able to regain custody of her children.

This paper looks specifically at the ways in which women's sexual relationships with men become central to assessments of their ability to mother. Using examples from specific cases, I argue that dominant ideologies of ideal womanhood are deployed to demand a mother's chastity and self-sacrifice. While the policing of mothers' sexuality has been a fixture in U.S. public welfare policy, a current manifestation of this uses sexuality as a litmus

test for a mother's commitment to her children.

Sites and methods

Under U.S. federal law, absent a dozen circumstances, parents must be given an opportunity to reunify with their children.[1] Most often, counties comply by providing services to biological parents who wish to reunify with a child. The goal of these services is to reduce the risk identified so that a child can safely return and remain at home. Because a child's family life has been determined to be unacceptable, a significant focus is placed on reforming parental behavior.

I gathered data using participant observation, interviews, policy analysis, and fieldwork. For over two years, I attended high-level county committee meetings, focused on reformulating policy. Additionally, I accompanied social workers as they investigated allegations of child abuse and neglect and determined whether children should be removed from their parents, and social workers in charge of coordinating reunification services and making recommendations regarding case outcome to the court. I observed confidential dependency court proceedings and followed cases in court for more than a year. I discussed cases and case histories with attorneys representing the children, the parents, or the county, and sat in on meetings between attorneys and parents. I also interviewed parents whose children had been removed by CPS and who were attempting (or had attempted) to reunify with them. At each stage, the looming question is whether a child should be returned to parents, placed in long-term care, or freed for adoption.

Idealized motherhood deployed

For women, the ability to become an acceptable mother requires her conformity to externally applied definitions of mothering. While the dominant ideology of motherhood has been widely critiqued (Fineman, 1995; Hanigsberg and Ruddick, 1999; Hoffnung, 1989; Ladd-Taylor and Umansky, 1998; Rich, 1976; Roberts, 1999a; Rothman,1989; Tice, 1998), this construct goes virtually unquestioned in the CPS system. Instead, women in the CPS system are encouraged to embrace these tropes. This idealized version of appropriate motherhood requires a woman to become self-sacrificing, chaste, and able to demonstrate that her children are the center of her life. As Smart (1991) observed, "A good mother is always available to her children, she spends time with them, guides, supports, encourages, and corrects as well as loving and caring for them physically. She is also responsible for the cleanliness of their home environment" (cited in Kline, 1995: 119). Mothers are sexual only when tied to men to whom they are married (Fineman, 1995).

In contrast to the archetypal good mother, the bad mother includes "those that did not live in a 'traditional' nuclear family; those who would not or could not protect their children from harm; and those whose children went wrong" (Ladd-Taylor and Umansky, 1998: 3). As Appell writes of CPS mothers, "Bad

mothers are the mothers who get caught" (1998: 357). This is therefore a study of women who have been legally identified as bad mothers. By the time they reach the reunification stage, a mother's culpability is no longer in question. A court, using a low legal standard of preponderance of the evidence, has found her to be responsible for the harm that befell her child. The mothers in this study—like most of the parents in the CPS system—are poor and overwhelmingly lack formal education. Their lack of resource and education further contributes to the defining of incompetent mothering. While no data are collected about the ethnic background of mothers, at least 60% of children in foster care are from racial or ethnic minority groups, with African-American children comprising the largest ethnic minority (DHHS; NCCANCH). Women of color are not the only ones who mother children of color (Funderburg, 1994; Ladner, 1997; Lazarre, 1996; Macey, 1995; McBride, 1996; Reddy, 1997; Reich, 2002; Twine, 1997). In fact, two of the white women discussed in this paper mother children who have Latino fathers. Nonetheless, the overrepresentation of minority children in the CPS system suggests an overrepresentation of women as color as well. While definitions of good motherhood are racialized, the expectations placed upon mothers who are attempting to reunify with their children are not significantly different based on race or ethnicity. Once in the system, concerns about women's sexual behavior are similarly applied.

Policing women's sexuality

Fineman suggests that "single motherhood as a social phenomenon should be viewed by feminists as a practice resistive to patriarchal ideology, particularly because is represents a 'deliberate choice' in a world with birth control and abortion" (1995: 125). Should we accept Fineman's argument that single motherhood represents a choice, then it can also be argued that the very existence of their children demonstrates that poor mothers lack the necessary morality to be mothers. Solinger points out that "in the nascent era of 'choice,' poor women who had children could be tagged as bad choice-makers, as 'morally depraved,' and targeted for child removal" (2001: 260). Out-of-wedlock births bring immoral sexuality into focus while poor women who bear children are additionally considered irresponsible. Indeed both of these issues were the main targets of the 1996 U.S. welfare reform act and justify further surveillance of bad mothers (Edelman, 1997; Joffe, 1998; Mink, 1995; Roberts, 1999b).

The monitoring of mothers' sexuality by welfare officials is not new; a mother's sexual behavior has been the centerpiece in assessments of her morality since the inceptions of social work. Tice's analysis of early child welfare workers in the progressive era demonstrates this. She argues,

> Charity organization society workers and their progeny became preoccupied with women's sexual morality and misconduct. They

> revised the long tradition of efforts to rescue and protect indigent and immigrant women that had directed much of the work done in evangelical maternity homes and protective residences for working women. Instead, they focused upon saving society from "morally tainted" women and girls thought to be capable of "infecting its members with a moral evil more hideous than physical disease." (1998: 30)

Starting in the early 1950s, welfare workers used a "man-in-the-house rule" to deny women welfare benefits. Trattner explains that under this policy, "widely adopted at the time, the presence of a man automatically made a home 'unsuitable' and was considered evidence that financial need did not exist, regardless of who the man was, his economic situation, or his relationship to the family" (1994: 311). Similar surveillance techniques have been used in Canada by what Little and Morrison refer to as "pecker detectors" (1999). In the U.S., the prohibition on having a man around was enforced by welfare agencies through the use of "midnight raids." These unannounced searches, carried out without a warrant, were common practice until the United States Supreme Court declared them unconstitutional in 1968 (Piven and Cloward, 1993; Trattner, 1994). As a result, the man-in-the-house rule cannot be used in the U.S. to determine eligibility for welfare benefits. However, matters of child protection allow social workers to investigate cases where a child is believed to be in danger. The presence of men not related to the child—most acutely those with a criminal history, particularly relating to illegal drugs, violence, or driving under the influence—are seen as indicators of likely maltreatment and appear on most CPS risk assessment tools as red flags. As one investigating social worker told me, "we still use the man-in-the-house rule. It's just us now," rather than the eligibility workers.

Once the courts remove a child from a home, a woman—now defined as a bad mother—must demonstrate her ability to make good motherly decisions. During the reunification process, women are strongly discouraged from developing or continuing relationships with men. While official policy does not explicitly ban intimate relationships, judges, social workers and attorneys advise against relationships because men are often seen as dangerous to children, making it difficult for children to return home. The courts are also concerned that boyfriends often derail women's reunification efforts, particularly when the man is not the child's father and is therefore not invested in the case outcome. Of course, not all men are of concern to CPS. Men who are married to the mothers of their children, so long as they have not caused the harm that befell the child, are of less concern. The men who are identified by CPS as unsafe for children have histories of criminal behavior, lack consistent employment, and are likely to be somewhat transient in lifestyle. These men typically do not support the household financially, nor present themselves as committed to protecting children from harm, most acute when the men are not

related to the children. I observed several cases where men not only failed to contribute materially, but were supported by a mother's meager public assistance grant. As the CPS system looks to identify men who pose a risk to children, poor men are almost exclusively identified. Criminal history weighs heavily in assessments of the appropriateness of men as well. Men of color, who are more likely to have a criminal history because of the significant racism in the criminal justice system, are also more likely to be perceived as a threat to a mother's bid for her children. While these policies affect men of color, there are many cases where poor white men were banned from the homes of women in the CPS system. Logically, these are the men CPS mothers who are overwhelmingly poor and disproportionately women of color are likely to meet. However, this is not a fact the CPS system officials take into consideration.

Part of the motherhood mystique is the requirement that mothers must prioritize their relationship with their children above all others. This cultural expectation becomes a legal mandate for mothers involved with CPS. Many women are not willing to abandon companionship while undergoing reunification. This often leads to elaborate attempts to hide relationships and living arrangements. For example, I observed a case where a child was removed from his African-American mother after his stepfather inappropriately disciplined him. During the period of reunification, they were each ordered to attend parenting classes and counseling and were ordered to remain apart. Despite court orders to the contrary, the mother attempted to still see her husband, a fact that was brought to the attention of the judge during a hearing to assess progress. The mother explained that her husband was not living at her house, but with his mother and that he simply came by once in a while to visit. The judge exploded, stating, "I am not going to play games with you over the meaning of the word 'live!'" adding that he believed that in fact the husband was sleeping over. The judge, a former probation officer, explained that if there were positive reports from counselors, he would relax the court orders, but if the reports were not positive, "I don't care how long you've been married, I won't allow him there."

Whether her husband stayed with her or not is largely irrelevant while her son was in foster care placement. Nonetheless, the mother's choice to allow her husband to "visit" was at issue because it suggested a lack of compliance with a court order. Her attempts to conceal her relationship communicated a larger message about her priorities. Because her desire to maintain a relationship with her husband is in opposition with her ability to regain custody of her son, her actions suggest to the court that she is unwilling to sacrifice her own desires for the good of her son. She therefore fails to perform the duties embodied in the good mother.

The binary between sexuality and self-sacrifice is not inconsequential. A mother's willingness to accept the prescribed chastity, as embodied in the image of the good mother, determines her case outcome. To demonstrate the significance of this, the following section compares two cases: one in which a

mother regained her child and one in which a mother did not. By comparing the cases of Audrey, who successfully reunified with her daughter, and Mary, whose parental rights to her three children were terminated, we can clearly see how a woman's sexual behavior can determine whether or not she can remain a mother.

Audrey

Audrey, an attractive 19-year-old white woman, entered CPS when police executed a search warrant and seized large quantities of drugs and cash that were part of her 27-year-old live-in boyfriend's side business. At the time of the seizure, their four month-old daughter was placed in protective custody and Audrey and her boyfriend were arrested, though criminal charges against her were eventually dropped. Her boyfriend was sentenced to four years in jail, with the possibility of only servicing half of his sentence. As an undocumented Mexican immigrant, he would be deported upon his release. In addressing the issues remaining for the dependency court, Karen Klein, the attorney appointed to represent her infant daughter on the case, was uncharacteristically sympathetic explaining that "it appears this mother was dating the wrong person... This is not to say that she isn't to blame; she did have drugs in her home." The judge felt less kindly towards Audrey. He stated,

> *I find it hard to believe you were just dating the wrong man as Ms. Klein said. I find it hard to believe you didn't know... That doesn't mean you use [drugs] and it doesn't mean you aren't a good mother to this child. I would suggest you will be given an opportunity to reunify with your child and I want you to take it seriously. I don't think you are totally innocent in this situation.*

After the case concluded, Karen and I discussed her position. She explained to me that she would "love to be that mother's counselor." She explained that she had pulled Audrey aside and told her that she needs to "find out who Audrey is ... not as a mother, not as a girlfriend" but on her own. As her daughter's attorney, she again takes it for granted that she will discover a greater commitment to mothering without a boyfriend present. She said that Audrey said that sounded good and said that she did not intend to have any more boyfriends. Most likely, Audrey's appearance as a young, white, attractive woman allowed Karen, a young white woman, to identify with her.

As Audrey recounted the same conversation to me, she explained that Ms. Klein had doubted her resolve to avoid new relationships with men. Audrey explained,

> *Well [my daughter's] lawyer, she's like, "Well, you will; you're just in shock." And I'm like, "No. All I want to do is work and take care of my daughter and that's that." And that's all I do now. I work and come home and take*

> *care of her. I don't have time to go out with someone else. I don't see it happening. If it did, it did. But I don't see it happening. I'd feel too guilty towards my daughter. I'd feel too bad bringing other men around.*

Audrey provided answers to Karen that indicated she was willing to sacrifice her own social needs for the good of her daughter and that she aspired to, for the first time, provide materially for her child. The absence of her incarcerated boyfriend and her vow to wait for him created the image of a mother willing to forego relationships. In discussing her plan, she explained, "two years is just fine for me. I can do it by myself." The incarceration of her boyfriend forced her to claim a sense of independence. Audrey's acceptance of her need for independence made her an appropriate mother in the eyes of the CPS system. She convinced Karen Klein who, like most children's attorneys, almost never recommends reunification, that she was reforming. She seemed to embrace her newfound self-reliance in a way that was palatable to the courts. Most importantly, she reiterated her intentions to avoid relationships with men. She also regained custody of her daughter within seven months of the initial case, with unsupervised visitations granted almost immediately. In contrast to Audrey's willingness to forego a relationship and focus on caring for her child, Mary's case demonstrates the failure women experience when they choose differently.

Mary

Mary, a white woman in her early 30s, was slow to begin her reunification services following the removal of her three children when her youngest was tested positive for methamphetamines at birth. A year into her case, she became motivated and entered a church-run residential drug treatment program. After completing the one-year program as a model client, Mary stayed on as a group leader and mentor to others. The role gave her a source of positive feedback and a sense of accomplishment. While in the program, she met Dennis, a man with a long criminal history of possession of drugs and drug paraphernalia and of drug dealing. Without telling the program leaders, her social workers, or her attorney, Mary and Dennis were married. While this created an issue for her service providers at the program, it was a crisis for her CPS case. Because Mary was beginning the process of having her children returned to her, she initially attempted to hide the marriage. Months later, she did approach her social worker to ask that she give Dennis his own case plan; the social worker, feeling betrayed by Mary, refused. Additionally, the social worker explained that her case was more than 18 months old, approaching the legislatively determined limit for reunification, and that she was not willing to start over with someone else. This situation singularly changed Mary's case from one where reunification was likely to one where she was about to lose her children permanently.

The day before the hearing to determine whether Mary's reunification services should be terminated, the last step before termination of parental rights

is decided, Mary filed for a legal separation from Dennis. Her attorney argued emphatically on her behalf. "By all accounts, this is a mother who is capable of parenting. She is willing to put aside her relationship with Dennis. She is late but she has done it. She has been very blunt about her relationship since... it came out. She has no intention of reuniting with him." His efforts to convince the court of the permanency of their separation were belied by Mary's visibly pregnant belly.

In giving his ruling to terminate her reunification services, the judge addressed Mary directly.

> *You have done a lot of work but it's been three years. I can't send them home. You made a fatal error in judgment when you got up to the 18 month hearing in March and got involved with and married someone who is clearly inappropriate for these children. He has a long history of substance abuse, like their fathers. It is not about now that you're separated... You made a poor choice to get involved with a man while you are fighting with what I would assume is everything you've got. It was a poor choice. You've had lots of time and you've come a long way. But even giving you the benefit of what you've done, we don't have time. These children are entitled to go on with their own life. I won't fault [the social worker] for not developing a relationship with Dennis. He shouldn't have been a factor.*

While Mary's involvement with a bad man was a key aspect of her case, her willingness to commit energy to a new relationship was perceived as a lack of commitment to her children. Mary did not reunify with her children who were adopted by their foster parents: her oldest son by his paternal aunt and her younger two children by a wealthy white lesbian couple. Mary's case is indisputably sad. While no one, including her social worker who supervised visitations with between her and her children, doubted her capacity to mother, she was not able to demonstrate a totalizing commitment to her children. Her unwillingness to suppress her own sexuality when she met Dennis, a need that led to her relationship with him, showed her lack of maternal sacrifice. What happened after she became involved with Dennis was almost irrelevant. In the court's view, if after eighteen months of working to reunify with her child she could be derailed from actualizing ideal motherhood, there was little reason for the court to believe that she would be more committed to her children if returned to her. Mary failed to reform. By contrast, Audrey began to conceive of herself as wholly committed to her daughter. She declared a lack of interest in men, thereby communicating her new commitment to motherhood.

Sexuality and the suspect mother

Until now, I have argued the centrality of sexuality to considerations of the ability to mother. Yet the court's willingness to allow a white upper-middle class lesbian couple to adopt the young children calls this into question. The

outcome of Mary's case illustrates how concerns about sexual behavior are only deployed on those the court deems suspect. For the most part, women can be both sexual beings and legal mothers so long as they are perceived as committed to their children above all else. Once her capacity to mother or commitment to mothering is called into question, her sexuality will immediately be interrogated. The committed lesbian couple who participated in court proceedings for almost two years seemed, beyond question, committed to the children in a way Mary never appeared to be. Because their commitment was unquestioned, their sexuality did not become an issue. At one point, the paternal aunt who wanted foster placement of all three children alleged that the lesbian foster mothers were unfit to parent because of their sexuality. Because the children had been placed with the couple since infancy without any indication they were anything but committed to adopting them, the court disregarded the argument. Had the social worker or court had reason to believe the couple was endangering the children, their sexuality would inevitably have become fore-grounded, regardless of the nature of the allegation. Once a woman's ability to mother is called into question—whether in divorce proceedings, custody battles, or in the juvenile court—the only way a woman can retain her right to mother is through adherence to dominant ideologies of motherhood.

Conclusion

There are situations in which women's sexual behavior inhibits her ability to make good decisions for herself and her children, often because many mothers in CPS were victims of abuse themselves. Research suggests that mothers of sexually abused children are disproportionately more likely to have been abused themselves (Oates *et al.*, 1998) and that mothers who were sexually abused in childhood are likely not able to give their children appropriate structure, consistent discipline, and clear behavioral expectations (Ruscio, 2001). Other research suggests that many of the patterns established early in life dictate the kinds of relationships these women are likely to seek out (Gelles and Cornel, 1985l). Women are often unable to leave relationships that are abusive to themselves or their children because of fear, lack of social support, or financial dependence. As Dorothy Roberts suggests, "maternal failures can only be assessed in the context of mothers' own experience of domestic violence" (1999a: 33).

There are also countless stories of women who allowed men to enter their home only to victimize their children. The potential for women's relationships with men to jeopardize children's safety is real, a fact that should not be minimized. Real threats need to be assessed, but they need to be assessed independently on a case-by-case basis. There was no credible reason to believe, for example, that Dennis posed any threat to Mary's children. Rather, his participation in counseling and their shared residence in a treatment program offered a credible suggestion that the risk was minimal. Mary's children were permanently removed then not because of a reasonable belief that they were

endangered but because their mother failed to perform the hallmark of good mothering: sexual self-sacrifice.

In discussing the failures of efforts to fix bad mothers, Annette Appell notes, "the child welfare establishment too often views their lives through a single lens; the textures and perspectives of each mother and her children become invisible or muted" (Appell, 1998: 377). In assessing women's commitment and ability to mother, women's sexual behavior is integrated into that single lens. Rather than helping women to learn skills for negotiating sexual and personal decision-making, CPS uses maternal sexual behavior as shorthand for a lack of commitment to mothering, with mothers and children losing.

[1]The 1997 Safe Families and Adoption Assistance Act states that states are not required to attempt "reasonable efforts" at reunification. in the following situations: if a court has determined that the parent has subjected the child to aggravated circumstances (which may include, but is not limited to, abandonment, torture, chronic abuse, and sexual abuse); if the parent has "committed murder" or "committed voluntary manslaughter" of another child of the parent; if the parent has aided or abetted, attempted, conspired, or solicited to commit such murder or such a voluntary manslaughter; if a parent has committed a felony assault that results in serious bodily injury to the child or another child of the parent; if the parental rights of the parent to a sibling have been terminated involuntarily, (Public Law 105-89, 11/19/1997). Additionally, California added that reunification efforts are not necessary if parents' whereabouts are unknown; parent is suffering from a mental condition that renders him or her incapapble of utilizing services (This requires two psychological evaluations); The parent has been convicted of a violent felony; The parent caused severe abuse on a child under the age of five. Even if one of the aforementioned situations exist, a court could order reunification services if it felt it was in the best interest of the child. Otherwise, the federal law requires that states begin processes to terminate parental rights.

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Karen C. Kranz and Judith C. Daniluk

We've Come a Long Way Baby...Or Have We?

Contextualizing Lesbian Motherhood in North America

> A Florida court ruled yesterday that a convicted murderer was a better potential parent for his 11-year-old daughter than her lesbian mother. (*Halifax Daily News*, August 31, 1996: 43)

> If you are gay or lesbian, it gets tiresome—after it stops being hurtful—to be told that your family isn't a real family.... (*Ottawa Citizen*, April 8, 1998: A17)

To each of us the word family is imbued with meaning. In Western culture, an exclusive definition of family has been consistently promoted—the "heterosexual conjugal unit based on marriage and co-residence" (Silva and Smart, 1999: 1). As Dalton and Bielby state, this "monolithic notion of the traditional nuclear family is difficult to dispel because it seems to be natural and biological, the most timeless and unchanging of all social institutions" (2000: 36). Although the traditional nuclear family is no longer the norm, and has never been representative of the realities of many people, the values and ideals related to this definition of family continue to be privileged and socially sanctioned (Mandel and Duffy, 2000). As such, the plethora of alternative family forms (e.g., lesbian families, gay families, foster families, extended family configurations) have been, and continue to be perceived as deficient (Silva and Smart) or rendered invisible (Dunne, 2000). The landscape of the traditional nuclear family is currently being challenged by the increasing visibility of a "wide variety of alternative family forms" (O'Connell, 1992: 281) including the family configuration that is the focus of this paper, the lesbian-parented household.

The growing numbers of lesbian (and gay) parents represents a "sociocultural innovation that is unique to the current historical era" (Patterson, 1995:

263). In fact, the term Canadian "lesbian baby-boom" has been coined in reference to the burgeoning number of lesbians choosing to become parents (Arnup, 1998). In the past most lesbian-headed families consisted of children conceived in one or both partner's heterosexual relationships, prior to coming out as lesbians. Although these families challenged the traditional nuclear family, the social roles of both mother and father were filled. Currently, however, increasing numbers of lesbians are choosing to have children subsequent to coming out as lesbians, thereby even more directly challenging the centrality and importance of the fatherhood role in childbearing and rearing. It should not be surprising; then, that the lesbian-parented household has been, and continues to be one of the more socially stigmatized family forms.

A considerable amount of research is available supporting the social and psychological integrity of lesbians and their children (Golombok, Spencer and Rutter, 1983; Golombok and Tasker, 1996; Green, Mandel, Hotvedt, Grey and Smith, 1986; Hoeffer, 1981; Huggins, 1989; Javid, 1993; Kirpatrick, Smith and Roy; 1981; Tasker and Golombok, 1995). However, many social, legal, political, and religious structures and institutions refuse to acknowledge and extend equal rights and support to lesbians and their children. In this paper, we explore the more common arguments advanced against lesbians and gay parents in mainstream culture and the popular media. These include the assumption that: lesbianism and motherhood are antithetical to each other; lesbians (and gays) are likely to molest children; healthy child development requires the presence and availability of biological fathers; lesbian families pose a threat to traditional nuclear families; and lesbians are selfish to bring children into families that are stigmatized by society. Each of these assumptions are discussed below and challenged in light of the available research. We conclude with a brief discussion of some of the more progressive developments that may serve to make motherhood a more viable option for lesbians and increase the visibility and legitimacy of lesbians and their children.

Lesbianism and motherhood as antithetical

Prevalent mainstream attitudes towards lesbian mothers reflect the belief that lesbianism and motherhood are antithetical to each other (Ainslie and Feltey, 1991; Gabb, 1999; Hequembourg and Farrell, 1999; Kirpatrick, 1996; Nelson, 1996; Morningstar, 1999; Muzio, 1991; Patterson, 1994; Pollack, 1992; Shore, 1996). In fact, the mere presence of lesbian mothers challenges North American society's traditional notions of motherhood (Arnup, 1997). Prevalent societal values deem married heterosexual women as the most appropriate parents (DiLapi, 1989). In contrast, "the 'deviant,' 'unwed', and negligent' lesbian is not close enough to the dominant centre of 'good mother' to be able to assume the right to mother unquestioningly" (Fumia, 1999: 92). Thus, as Polikoff observes, "to most of the world, a mother is by definition heterosexual" (1987: 54). "Motherhood, then, while theoretically available to all women, seemingly reinscribes a cultural dilemma; lesbian or mother, but

not both" (Monson, 1999: 122).

Lesbian families also challenge traditional ideas about motherhood given that social motherhood introduces the "possibility of detaching motherhood from its biological roots" (Dunne, 2000: 15). In discussing the "'culture of motherhood' with its own entrance requirements [and] discourse" (Nelson, 1999: 41), Nelson notes how biological mothers make the transition into maternal culture when their pregnancies become apparent and others begin to recognize them as mothers. In contrast, social or non-biological mothers do not have a similar "claim to the status of 'mother'" (Nelson: 42), as is the case for the lesbian parent whose relationship status with her child(ren) is based on social rather than biological ties. This effectively renders her parental status as anomalous with accepted norms, making it difficult for her and her children to define their respective roles and to have these socially acknowledged, much less accepted or respected.

Another reason lesbianism and motherhood appear to be antithetical to each other is that for many people the word lesbian conjures up images of sex (Pollack, 1992) and specifically non-reproductive sexual practices that occur outside of marriage and that are seen as deviant and immoral (Sullivan 1996). Motherhood on the other hand, conjures up stereotypic images of women who unconditionally love their children, are selfless, and whose primary identity is as mothers—the Madonna side of the Madonna-whore dichotomy (Daniluk, 1998). In underscoring the nature of this social construction of motherhood Kitzinger (1985) notes how mothers are frequently portrayed in the popular media as sexually uninteresting and sexually undesirable. Hence the stereotypic image of the sex-craved lesbian is highly inconsistent with this virginal image of mothers.

Homosexuals molest children

Another argument made against lesbian motherhood pertains to the erroneous and unsubstantiated belief that homosexuals molest children (Achtenberg, 1990; Falk, 1994; Hargaden and Llewellin, 1996; O'Brian and Goldberg, 2000, Kirpatrick, 1990; Pollack, 1992; Rivera, 1987). This belief is elucidated in an article that recently appeared in the *Edmonton Journal* (July 16, 1997) which presented an argument against allowing gays and lesbians to be foster parents. The article reported the following:

> Though Edmonton's foster parents association has said there is a shortage of people willing to be foster parents, Oberg [Alberta's Family and Social Services Minister] said that isn't enough reason to place them in the care of gays and lesbians. "You could carry that argument one step further" [the minister said] "and if someone who was a convicted child molester comes forward, are you going to take them just on the basis that we don't have enough foster families?" (Arnold, 1997: A1)

The association between homosexuals and child molesters implies that gays and lesbians are not fit to be foster parents because, based on their socially deviant sexual orientations, they are more likely to molest children. The same bias underlies arguments against gay and lesbian teachers—purportedly based on the need to 'protect' young children from possible abuse, and from being influenced into a homosexual lifestyle. However, the reality is that 85 percent of all molestation is perpetrated by men who are heterosexually orientated (Rivera, 1987). The assumption that homosexuals will molest children is unfounded.

Fathers are required for the healthy development of children

Lesbian parenting, and in particular the use of donor sperm by lesbians, is also challenged on the grounds that the adequate psychosocial development of children requires the availability and presence of a biological father. This belief is clearly evident in the words of Margaret Somerville, a founding director of McGill University's Centre for Medicine, Ethics, and Law, who stated in a recent newspaper interview that:

> it is not in the best interest of a child to use reproductive technologies to create babies for same-sex couples.... Not because the people are gay, [but] because I think you need a mother and a father. I think you need a role model of each sex. (cited in Kirkey, 2000: A8)

Consistent with holding the nuclear family as the norm against which all other family configurations are judged as deficient, the assumption promoted by Ms. Somerville and by many "experts" is that a child requires a father as a role model (ideally the child's biological father) in order for healthy psychosocial and *psychosexual* development to occur—irrespective of the quality and nature of this relationship. The origins of this argument can be traced to Western theories of psychological development that traditionally emphasized mothers' and fathers' roles in healthy child development (Brewaeys and van Hall, 1997; Patterson, 1997). For example, psychoanalytic theory proposed that healthy psychological development depends on the successful resolution of the oedipal conflict—which requires the presence of both a mother and a father in a child's life. Likewise, social learning theorists suggest that lesbian families may be non-conventional in their reinforcement of gender-role behaviors, which in turn may negatively impact children's sexual identities and gender development—in other words, that lesbian and gay parents may, through modeling and social influence, encourage their children to become homosexual (Golombok, 1999).

However, research does not support the assumption that healthy child development is contingent on the presence or involvement of biological fathers (Golombok, Spencer and Rutter, 1983; Golombok and Tasker, 1996; Green, Mandel, Hotvedt, Grey and Smeith, 1986; Hoeffer, 1981; Huggins, 1989;

Javid, 1993; Kirpatrick, Smith and Roy; 1981; Tasker and Golombok, 1995). For example, Golombok, Tasker, and Murray (1997) conducted interviews and administered a battery of standardized tests to children between the ages of three and nine years in 30 lesbian and 42 heterosexual families. These researchers found that children raised in fatherless families since their first year of life, were no more likely to develop emotional or behavioral problems then children residing with their fathers.

Lesbian families pose a threat to traditional nuclear families

Some theorists contend that mainstream resistance to lesbian families is based on the threat these families pose to patriarchal institutions—and in particular the male dominated family unit (Pollack, 1992). This resistance to lesbian (and gay) families is evident in the reactions of the public to legal rights being extended to homosexuals. For example, in response to the Supreme Court of Canada's recent ruling to expand the definition of spouse to include same-sex couples, based on the *Charter of Rights and Freedom*, the *Toronto Sun* reported the following:

> The court's ruling in *M* v. *H* redefined common-law spouse to include a same-sex partner... "The ruling is an assault on democracy." The ruling, we are told, overrules the wishes of citizens and politicians who have constantly voted against changing the definition of spouse to include same-sex partners. What right do eight of nine judges (there was one dissenting opinion) have to change laws passed by dozens of legislators on behalf of thousands of constituents? (Ward, 1999: 15)

Similarly, lobby organizations such as the Coalition of Concerned Canadians "views any move towards the recognition of gay and lesbian families as a diminution of traditional [families]" (Duffy, 1996: A10). Lesbian families threaten patriarchal culture by creating family structures that do not include men and over which men have no power or authority. Lesbian families also challenge the heterosexual norm of the woman as homemaker and caretaker and the man as breadwinner, as lesbian couples may choose to divide household, childcare, and paid labor on the basis of factors other then gender (Sullivan, 1996). Additionally, the existence of lesbian families removes parenting from the monopoly of heterosexuals (Dunne, 2000). Finally, lesbian women choosing to parent without the presence of males "implies a kind of self sufficiency which is threatening to the patriarchal order of society" (Evans, 1990: 45).

Children of lesbians will be stigmatized

Another prevalent argument made against lesbian motherhood is based on the assumption that children of lesbians will be traumatized or stigmatized by society (Falk, 1994; Mooney-Somers and Golombok, 2000; Rivera, 1987).

Lesbians have been called selfish for wanting children, knowing that they may be socially stigmatized, shamed, and subjected to ridicule by their peers for having lesbian parents (Alldred, 1996). North American courts have often ruled that children should be removed from their lesbian homes based on the assumption that these children will be socially condemned. For example, the *Montreal Gazette* reported the following Richmond, Virginia judge's statement:

> We have previously said that living daily under conditions stemming from active lesbianism practiced in the home may impose a burden upon a child by reason of the 'social condemnation' attached to such an arrangement. (Associated Press, 1995: A21)

This argument against children residing in lesbian families does not appear to be based on evidence that lesbian mothers demonstrate deficient parenting abilities, or on the problematic nature of their parent-child relationships. Indeed, the literature supports the parental competencies of many lesbian parents and underscores the benefits to children of being raised with two mothers, often within a close and supportive community of women (Brewaeys, Ponjaert, van Hall and Golombok, 1997; Flaks, Ficher, Masterpasqua and Joseph, 1995; Tasker and Golombok, 1998). The stigma associated with being a member of a lesbian-headed family is a societal by-product based on homophobic and sexist attitudes, not on the quality of lesbian families (Falk, 1994). As Tulchinsky illustrates in her editorial in the *Vancouver Sun*, it is inaccurate to assume, as many people appear to do, that lesbian parents do not care that their children may experience discrimination. Indeed this is a serious consideration for many lesbians when making the decision to bring children into a homophobic world:

> My partner and I are not naïve. We are prepared for the worst (and the best). We cannot know what our child will experience in a world that often shuns gay families, or in schools that refuse to recognize gay parents. But we do know what the child will experience in our home. Our child will know other lesbian and gay families. We will teach our son or daughter to respect others, to be proud and rejoice in diversity. We will honor our child's feelings and respect her struggles. Whatever the challenges, there will be no shortage of love, laughter and leather teething rings. (Tulchinsky, 1999: E5)

Indeed much of North American society is homophobic and as such, children of lesbians are likely to experience teasing, particularly in geographic areas and communities that support right wing, conservative beliefs. Much of North American society is also racist and children of minorities are often teased and harassed. However, people of color and economically disadvantaged people are not socially encouraged to reconsider their parenting desires and are

not labeled as being selfish when they elect to have children (Epstein, 1996).

A crack in the door? Some recent developments toward legitimacy and equity

These negative assumptions and biased beliefs about lesbian parenting reflect the homophobic, heterosexist (DiLapi, 1989), and heteronormative assumptions that pervade North American culture. Although they have no basis in fact, they persist—creating a hostile and dismissive social environment for lesbian-headed families. Given the prevalence of these erroneous and unsubstantiated beliefs, it is inevitable that to varying degrees all lesbian couples and their children must struggle to have their families and realities acknowledged and supported.

However, there are some glimmers of hope. As recently as ten years ago most lesbians had to turn to friends and acquaintances to access sperm, and to liberal and compassionate physicians for assistance in becoming pregnant. Today however, they have considerably more options available. Recent access to donor sperm through fertility clinics has significantly reduced concerns about the safety of the sperm (HIV infection) and health history of the donor (e.g., screening of donors re: genetic predisposition for serious health problems, mental illness, addictions, etc.) (Haimes and Weiner, 2000; Saffron, 1994). The availability of large sperm banks is allowing many lesbian couples to have greater choice in the selection of their sperm donor, and opens up the possibility of using sperm from the same donor for subsequent pregnancies, thereby ensuring that their children share a common genetic history. The option of donor anonymity has also helped assuage the fears of many lesbian couples about future paternal claims for involvement in the lives of their children.

Small but significant inroads are also being made in terms of increasing the legal and institutional rights of lesbians (Nelson, 1996; Pies, 1987). For example, on August 29, 2001, the *Vancouver Sun* reported the following:

> Ruling in the case of two lesbian couples who challenged the current process of registering their newborn infants, the tribunal said that when a lesbian couple conceives a child using sperm from an anonymous donor, both partners can be listed on the child's birth certificate. Before this decision, the non-birth mother had to legally adopt the child before being officially recognized as a parent. (Sandler, 2001: A1)

Previously, the non-biological mother was required to formally adopt her child—a legal option that even seven years ago was not available to her. This ruling advances the rights of lesbian families even further in permitting non-birth mothers to have the same legal rights as men whose partners' conceive children through anonymous donor insemination. It represents a "significant decision in the continuing progression towards full equality of lesbian and gay families" (Sandler, 2001: A1). As a consequence of the tireless efforts of lesbians

and gays throughout North America to have their families and their parental roles acknowledged and legitimized, in recent years many companies and public institutions have begun to extend the same spousal and parental rights to lesbian and gay couples and their children (e.g., parental leave, health benefits, etc.).

Although controversy over lesbian parenting remains, legal and social changes are taking place. We hope these trends toward a more equitable and inclusive vision of family continue, not just for lesbians and their children but for all the many families that fall outside the margins of the traditional nuclear family. We acknowledge however, that much work remains to be done.

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Cassie Premo Steele

Dreams of Fire

7:45 a.m. I wake from a dream. The image burns. His clothes in her crib. He has left them there. His underwear.

He touches me. The baby is not yet awake. An invitation. I pull away.

***

The fire goddess, Pele, makes volcanoes rise from beneath the earth, and makes islands out of her anger.

I am an island. Made of fire. My dreams burn in me, and I turn away from my husband, from his desire.

***

I am a survivor. I say it. To myself. What I suffer from is my own past. But the dream is what I suffer from in the present. In the dream it is my baby. In danger.

So I wake. As a mother. And wonder.

Alone.

***

2:16 a.m. I wake again, hot and anxious, worried about Lily's new preschool, certain that the teacher is not good for her. She is too nervous, too talkative, too much.

Lying there, in the dark, I remember that "too muchness" is a signal of trauma.

I get up, go to the couch in the living room, start to write. What I know to do. To survive.

Today, I write, when I picked her up after her first day, the teacher's face was red and sweaty, and Lily's body was limp and exhausted. She felt like a doll, filled with lead.

I tried to talk to Meili about it before we went to bed. He was tired, turned over. Told me to let it go.

I begin to page through the yellow pages, looking for another preschool. I find that the one we have an appointment to visit has flexible, part-time rates. This calms me enough that I think I can finally go back to sleep.

The cat walks in to the living room with a huge cockroach in her mouth. I look away.

***

I survived by looking away.

When my father raped my mother, I looked away.

When he whipped his belt against my bedroom wall, I looked away.

But still I heard the sounds.

No.

Crack.

***

No preschool today. Lily is home, safely. As she crawls on a blanket on the back porch, my thoughts turn to work: a deadline for an essay due in two days, an email I need to send to an editor, thoughts of a new project.

The only time I feel she is safe is when she is with me. She is not safe at her school. She is not safe when I am sleeping. She is not safe when I go away. So I keep her home from school. I do not sleep. I do not go away.

I am so tired, I feel like I am on fire.

***

It is said that when Pele is angry, she appears as a woman, stamping her feet. The earth shakes. Fire rises.

I want to make something burn. Shake myself, take the dreams out of myself, make all the earth take notice this way.

***

3:18 a.m. I wake again from a dream where my desire returns, and we try to make love, but Lily's crib bars are down, she might fall out, so we try to put them up, but they squeak, and she wakes, so we do not make love.

What were we doing in her room? I think, in the dark. Has someone been in her room?

I get up, walk to her room, quiet and black, open the door slowly, and feel the floor for wet semen.

Butterflies rush in my blood. I can hear my heart pounding. I find nothing.

***

Lily is napping and I pick up the phone. Call the rape crisis hotline. Tell them.

Say the words.

I am a survivor. And I am having dreams. Dreams of my daughter, abused. By her father. I don't know if it is happening. For real.

The counselor uses the word, "Revisitation." I see it, like this, with capitalization, a category, in my head. Like visitation. He has come back. To get us.

Visitation. A one-bedroom apartment in Sioux Falls, Iowa. The bedroom is filled with papers he has collected. Receipts and paper placemats. Sheets of his craziness.

We will sleep, in the hot summer night, on a bare mattress in the living room, all three of us, my father, my sister, and me.

Before bed, he rubs apple cider vinegar over my sister's sunburned back. She screams. The skin burns red. Erupts. Volcanoes. He does not stop. Someone told him it would work, he says, again and again, getting angry.

My sister gets quiet at his anger. Afraid he will erupt. Only her skin still seethes. I look away.

***

The counselor, still on the phone, suggests a group for survivors. I say I will consider going but know I won't go. The truth is I don't want to dig deeper, fear going back any more will make me crazier. I want so much to be stable, grounded, solid. Hanging up the phone, I see myself trying to jump through the air. But when I land, the earth shakes under my feet.

***

8:03 p.m. I put Lily in her crib, and she turns on her side and sighs, sleeping. On my way out of the room, I carefully put a small block behind the door. If the door is opened in the night, I will know it.

***

That night my mattress is on fire. I flee, again, in my dreams, where I am screaming.

No one hears.

I wait for dawn.

The fire of the sun.

Hear her crying.

Go get her. The block knocks against the door as I open it. Unmoved.

I tell her good morning.

***

Lily gets a new teacher at school. The nervous, sweaty one is gone. And she is happy. Smiles as I'm leaving. Eyes bright when I pick her up. For two days this week, I have gotten some work done.

Small things. Reading. Queries. One poem.

I think about writing about this. This. The fire I feel. Revisitation. Mother Survivor. Titles come to me. I am afraid.

I call a writer-mentor friend. She is distracted, not really listening. Tells me to write when I'm ready. This is not what I need to hear. I am on fire.

***

4:52 a.m. A redheaded four year-old girl, an orphan, comes to us, in my dream. We take her in. But I don't think we can keep her, it is too much, I am not able to focus on Lily, I am distracted, exhausted, I can't give her all I want, it isn't fair to her.

I wake, tell Meili my dream. "It isn't fair to her?" he says. "It isn't fair to us."

***

In the morning, I write again. The dream was a breakthrough. Somehow, as cruel as it sounds, I cannot take in this orphan (who is myself as a child) and be the mother I want to be. I have to give my self as a child back in order to be the mother Lily needs. The mother I want to be.

***

I call her. The woman who was the witness to my memories almost ten years ago. We make an appointment. I write it down.

***

The teacher is back. She had only been out temporarily, and now she's back. I talk to the director. I am almost in tears. There is something wrong with this teacher, I can feel it.

That afternoon, when I go to pick Lily up, the teacher is diapering her in her crib as I walk through the door. This is strange, I think. Then as I get closer, I notice Lily is asleep. So why was the teacher, so close, moving her hands over the baby's body, in her sleep? I pick my baby up. And never take her back.

***

Allison listens. She wants to know every detail. The crawling on the floor at night. The blocks behind the door. The dreams. Lily's limp body. The teacher. My fears. Everything.

And as the words come out of me, like ashes, I feel the fire burning down. I see the razed ground. I see my skin again, in need of healing.

She hands me bandages. With her eyes. I place the tears, carefully, over the blisters, to cool the wounds.

***

The dreams go away. So do my suspicions of my husband. We find a new preschool. The redheaded girl recedes. Goes back into my past.

The flames are gone. But sometimes, at dusk, I can still smell the land, smoking. And when I do, I trust my husband to rock our daughter to sleep, and I go outside, into the air of cooling night. I breathe deeply, and slowly, I begin to write.

Marla J. Arvay and Patrice A. Keats

Opening Pandora's Box

Examining the Implications of Mothers' Adolescent Sexuality Narratives on Mother-Daughter Relationships

Marla: *"Last summer I had the pleasure of attending my niece's wedding in Ontario. At the reception I was introduced to the* Sunday Night Sex Show *host's daughter—the daughter of Dr. Sue. I could not help but wonder what type of relationship she might have with her mother, a national celebrity who openly and directly displays and demonstrates every imaginable sexual gadget on national television. Could she talk to her mother about her sexuality and conversely, would her mother be willing to talk to her about her own sexual experiences? Later that fall, I met my 19-year-old daughter in Key West for a holiday. We were able to obtain tickets to the play* The Vagina Monologues. *Although the small playhouse was full, I noticed that my daughter and I were the only mother-daughter pair in the audience that night. I wondered how many other mother-daughter pairs had attended this play in other parts of America. What was their response? Did they feel as comfortable as I did with my daughter listening to stories about women's vaginas and yelling out as loudly as possible CUNT on cue?"*

Patrice: *"Interesting because I attended* The Vagina Monologues *with my 19-year-old daughter recently in Vancouver. At the part where they asked us to say cunt, hardly anyone responded. It was definitely not okay to shout it out. The play has been around for about 13 years, but just recently, they added a vagina-as-birthplace piece. This last monologue really struck me. Throughout the play, the focus was the vagina-as-sexual-organ. In this last monologue, the actor speaks about the vagina opening, stretching, and revealing the baby's head. As she narrated the vagina as birthplace, I noticed that the audience started to disconnect. It was as if introducing the*

> *vagina-as-motherhood had no place in the theatre. You just can not mix the metaphors. Vaginas could not speak simultaneously from the position of women's sexual identity and mothering identity."*

In our conversation as co-authors and researchers, we struggle to understand how the discourses of mothering and women's sexuality continue to manifest in our lives in ways that silence and rupture women's identity. Popular culture stages competing discourses on mothering and women's sexual identity. Popular cultural myths and norms regarding family values continue to pathologize the integration of women as both mothers and sexual beings. We continue to struggle with a double bind discourse (Walters, 228): a woman must identify herself as either a mother or a sexual being—each identity being outside the realm of the other. In terms of mother-daughter relationships, what are the implications of maintaining this double bind discourse?

The purpose of this article is to present the findings of a recent narrative study investigating why women in mid-life would tell their adolescent daughters about their adolescent sexual experiences or chose to remain silent. This preliminary study provided insights into the influence of mothers' sexual biographies on the mother-daughter relationship. The findings of this study invite further theoretical speculation with regard to women's sexual development and the implications of this development on the mother-daughter relationship.

In this narrative study, we invited 15 middle-aged women between the ages of 38 and 57 (mean age of 50 years) to talk about their own adolescent sexual experiences.[1] Demographically, the women in this study were mostly heterosexual—the one lesbian and one bisexual did not have same sex relationships until later in life. Two women were of First Nations descent. Eight were born and raised in Canada. Three women immigrated to Canada as young adults—two from South Africa and one woman from Scotland. Eighty-three percent of the participants were Caucasian of European descent. The participants were engaged in a variety of professions such as business, education, the legal field, the arts, and mental health. The religious affiliations reported were Jewish, Catholic, Protestant and Eastern Philosophies. In terms of marital status, seven women were married, three divorced, and two separated. Educationally, three had high-school diplomas, four obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree, three achieved a Masters level of education, and one a doctorate degree. The reported economic statuses of the participants were: two upper income, two upper-middle income, and five middle class. Upon completion of their story, we asked each of them if they would tell or remain silent about their sexual biography with their adolescent daughter(s). If they told their story, we asked how the telling of their own adolescent sexual experiences had been received by their daughter(s). If they chose to remain silent, we asked them to tell us more about their reasons for remaining silent. Three participants stated that they had shared some parts of their story with their daughters; the remaining partici-

pants had remained silent.

Once the interviews were completed, we proceeded to analyze the transcripts using a collaborative interpretive reading method (Arvay, 1998: 127). We distributed to the participants their own adolescent sexuality narrative and asked them to review it in order to make any corrections to the content. We also asked them if they would share this written account with their adolescent daughter(s). Of the 15 participants in this study, three participants decided to drop out of the study for the following reasons: "I am not comfortable with people reading my story," "The story is too raw—I am embarrassed if others read it," "I don't want anyone to read it because it is too exposing—I am not ready to show this to anyone." This left us with 12 remaining participants—seven who stated they had or would share their narrative accounts with their adolescent daughters and five who chose to remain silent.

We feel that reducing the narratives to categorical analyses does not do justice to the fullness or complexity of the research findings. Therefore, in order to contextualize the research findings for the reader, we chose to present two prototypes—two narrative accounts that reflect both sides of the debate. The first participant, Betty, stated that she would remain silent about this narrative with her daughter. Marley, the second participant, stated that she would openly tell her story with her adolescent daughter without reservation. Here are their stories.

Betty's Narrative

I grew up in a small village in Scotland with my older sister. Being raised in a rural environment, I was very present in my body and in the earth. I was part sheep. I specifically remember my dad coming home from the Second World War—a blonde haired, blue-eyed god. I experienced the magic of manhood—the magic thing of male power as he and his friends gathered in our home to sing and play the bagpipes. At the age of seven, my dad started his own business—a service station. It was a big thing, owning land, moving away from the feudal system and at that time, we moved into our own place above the service station. On moving day, my mother gave me this very important task—a dish of macaroni and cheese to carry to the new house. At seven, I discovered that I could grow up and be a woman. I could carry the food.

By the age of nine my relationship with my father started to change. He told me I was too old for hugging and kissing. That was the end of the evening hug and kiss from my dad. I remember crying in my bedroom, knowing my dad heard me. I knew that he was sitting in the next room hardening his heart.

It was not until I was about eleven that I experienced anything sexual. My first great sexual experience was swinging on a rope swing in a tree. I had this great orgasmic experience, a big mystery! No one had ever told me anything and no one could possibly have experienced anything like this. Not knowing what it was that had happened, I tried to find ways to make it happen again. It made no sense and I did not speak to anyone about it; I just felt it. About the same

I started my first period and it was quite traumatic. Nobody had told me about it. I was riding home on my bike and I saw blood on my green and white checked dress. I was scared because I did not know what it was. When I saw my mom, she said she should have told me about it since she was a nurse. She showed me how to use the belts and pads. They were awful things. At school, there was one toilet and it was stone cold and dirty. I had to share it with hundreds of other children. There was no privacy to change your pad nor could you carry a pad to school. No one told me it was important to wash. In Scotland, you were lucky to get a bath once a week. It was awful, awful, and grim.

When I was 13, my sister and I had to ride our bikes to the train to get to a school in another town. There were many boys on the train and my sister told me to cover my knees and not to smile with my teeth showing. It was clear that I was not to wear anything revealing. She got the idea that sexuality was bad from my mom, who got it from my granny because my grandfather was a minister. My mom never spoke to me directly about these things. She spoke to my sister and then my sister passed it on to me. No one talked about sex. There was no sex education and girls did not talk about it with each other. We were rivals, only interested in the boys. It was so fun, the magic of boys.

The first kiss—oh happy days, happy days! It happened after a Sunday school party when a boy walked me home. It was magic and innocence—so innocent. We did not know anything. I did not know what a penis was. I could not have told a penis from a tree. I did not know that boys had them and I had never seen one. I was so innocent. I had never seen anyone naked.

There was a lot of kissing. When I was 14 there started to be fondling. I remember those intense feelings of romance and seeking relationships with boys. It really drove my whole adolescence. When I was 15, I fell for a boy really hard. I saw him everyday and there was a lot of kissing and touching, but nothing genital. It was really innocent. It was all so connected with the landscape. When he broke up with me, I was heartbroken. It really cut deep. It was such a sweet relationship. This was a beautiful first love.

After about a year, I trapped a guy. I snared the guy of my dreams. In that relationship, I had a sense of deepening my own sexuality. We went deeper into the sexual world, but still it was not intercourse. I remember intense feelings of sexual desire but I did not know what to do with it. There was a lot of touching but not in a genital way. There was never any talk of "should we have sex." I just knew that I was not going to do that because it was just not done. I was afraid of getting pregnant. I still did not know that penises got erect although I must have known about getting pregnant. There was nothing about birth control at the time. No one talked about birth control. There was a sense of mystery about sex as something that happened when you got married. I believed that I would not have sex until I was married and whomever I had sex with was the person I would marry. That was the cultural code. When it did happen at age 22, it was a big mistake. I was not in love with him but I knew it was time to have sex. It was very disappointing. His penis penetrated me, but I was not going to feel

anything. It was not safe to feel anything. After the rope swing, there was lots of masturbating going on, but I did not make the connection between that experience and sex with a man. It was somehow separate.

Marley's narrative

I was born on Vancouver Island in 1941. I was abandoned by my mother as a child and raised by my maternal grandmother. I remember my mother telling me that I was lucky to have such shiny beautiful hair because it helped to make up for the fact that I was an ugly duckling. She threatened me if I didn't behave for grandma by saying she would take me to the men's barber shop where they would cut off my hair. When I was six my grandma died and I moved next door to my grandma's kindly old friend and her husband—Granny and Grandpa M. He was a pedophile who molested me twice when I was seven. I felt confused, guilty, and ashamed of myself. Granny came home one day and caught him molesting me. She asked me "Did that dirty old bugger touch you inside your underwear?" I told her "Yes" and then she took care of me and phoned my mother to say she couldn't keep me anymore.

Then I went to live in foster care where I learned that boys were favored over girls. I wished that I were a boy. When I was 11, my mother finally rescued me from foster care and for the first time in my life I lived with my mother. She had remarried and we were going to be a family and have a home together. I felt a sense of security and stability.

I got my period at 11. I was so happy because some of my school chums had gotten theirs already. It made me feel like I belonged. I thought my mother would be happy for me but she wasn't—instead she was furious. The first thing she said to me was, "Now we have really got problems!" She meant now I had the potential to become a pregnant teenager. You see she became pregnant with me as a teenager. This incident burst my bubble; I knew that we weren't going to become magically close and have a special relationship. She didn't take the time to show me how to put the pad and belt together. She just angrily harnessed me into this strange foreign rig and left me there in the bathroom. I remember crying and not knowing how to change the pad. I developed pubic hair around the time I began my menses and I remember being aware of it especially when I was close to 16, anxiously wondering "Oh my god! When will it stop growing? Is there no end to it?"

When I was about 13 or 14 years old, I became interested in boys and I remember living a double life. By day, I was so shy and innocent and by night, I was daring and bold, stuffing my brassier with woolly gloves and heading out alone for the near-by ice rink. I wanted to have the biggest, most obvious boobs so that the older boys would notice me and ask me to skate with them. This is my first memory of wanting to be irresistibly sexy and desirable to men and wanting a man to kiss me and make love to me.

I finally got a best friend and we would go out and get into trouble together. We were the sluts of the school. We would go out streetwalking together, stroll

up and down the main street, all gussied up in linen suits and nylons, high-heeled shoes, lots of make up, and tacky paper flowers stuck in our hair. We desperately wanted the boys in the cars to pick us up. Those boys never did pick us up but we both got some sexual experience with this young cab driver. He took me out one night and we necked and petted in his car. That was my first kiss. The next night he took my friend out and they did the same thing

One night I went out street walking all by myself. I got all gussied up and snuck out of the window and went strolling down the highway. Two guys picked me up in their car and we drove around for a while just cruising and burning gas. I went back to their apartment and ended up having sexual intercourse with the driver of the car. God, I was such a tramp. When he was having sex with me it was not like being in my body. I felt so emotionally detached from the experience. I was passive and numb, like when I was molested by my Grandpa M. It was something being done to me. However, I felt older like I was progressing somehow. I was hoping the boy would want me to be his girlfriend, but I never saw him again.

When I began grade 10, I was acutely aware of my reputation among my peers. I knew that I had better tidy up my act if I was to fit in and be accepted—so I did. I ended up just hanging out with my classmates and doing normal teenage things. I went out with a boy for a month and we had sex but there was some respectability to it because he was my boyfriend. However, he dumped me after a month. It was about this same time that my stepfather started to be very cruel to me. He accused me of sleeping around when I wasn't. I wanted to have a good reputation. My mother thought I was out of control too. This made me angry and I said to myself "Well, if that is what you think, then that is what I will do." I started staying out later, drinking more and becoming more promiscuous by flirting and petting with different boys. When I was 17, I finally had one steady boyfriend for a whole year. It made me happy to have a boyfriend and be a part of the crowd. I had sex with him maybe once every ten dates which seemed to be the norm in those days.

When I graduated from high school, my stepfather gave my mother an ultimatum: either she could live with him or me. Obviously, she chose him. There was never any hope for me with my mom. I felt so much hostility and resentment toward her. I mean her obligation to take care of me was over, so she didn't need to even think twice about it.

Mothers who remain silent about their sexual narratives

Five of the participants in this study (plus the three who dropped out) chose to remain silent about their early sexual experiences when speaking with their daughters. The following are their verbatim reasons for this decision:

> Gracie: *No absolutely not. If they read this story they would say "ooooh Mom that is disgusting." I don't think they want to know about their mother. It is embarrassing for them and me. I'm not ashamed of my*

adolescence but I think they would prefer not to know all the details. It is not just about me, it is also about their father since we met when we were 16.

Jane: *No I am not willing. I feel vulnerable and insecure and worried it would alter their image of me in a negative way. I am especially concerned about the section on masturbation. I feel that my daughters wouldn't understand. I want to be a good filter of information and not tell them things that are "inappropriate." I fear being rejected for seeming to be over-sexed as I am portrayed in the story.*

Caroline: *I do not think that I have to reveal everything to be a good parent. It is important to be able to empathize with my daughter when she is going through something difficult and use my own experiences as a reference point. However, I do not want to burden my child with every-thing that has happened to me. I think my personal experience is private. I do not think that my privacy should be invaded because I am a parent. I do not want to give my daughter information about me that she may not want to know. It is about respect and dignity—for her and me. I think it is private because it is very fundamental in my development as a human being and my evolving as a woman. I think young women are sexualized too young. I can talk to my daughter about our personal beliefs and perspectives on sexuality, on sexual behaviours and relationships without ever referring to specific instances in my own experiences.*

Ruby: *I do not want to change her "good mother" image of me. I am ashamed of some parts of my story and it is embarrassing to me to share with her. I also don't think she wants to know these parts of my life. At the same time I wish I knew more about my own mother's life, so it is paradoxical.*

Betty: I *had a fear about having my sexuality in my relationship with her. I needed to observe a boundary with her and that was why I had to push her away. As she emerges as a sexual being, there is a fear on my part that there would be sexuality in my relationship with her. I think that it is taboo. We need to be separate and have our own lives. It feels like a true thing—not a cultural thing, but something that is of nature.*

Mothers who chose to tell their sexual narratives

Three participants stated "yes," they already had shared their story with their daughter(s). The following are their responses as to why they chose to tell.

Anne: *This study has been so incredibly useful to me at a time when I was struggling with my daughter's emerging sexuality. I shared the story with her. It opened the door for me to discuss sexuality with her. It helped me get a handle on the experience of shame in my own life and how that was getting*

played out in my approach to my daughter's budding sexuality.

Petra: *Yes, I would give it to my eldest daughter to read who is 15 years old. I hesitated at first because of the molestation incidents and because of the detail of my first sexual experience. But I decided that the molestation story might help her awareness of the reality of sexual abuse and help think how she might set her own boundaries in the face of such a threat. I know that teens are sexually active younger now and perhaps knowing my story might encourage her to come to me when she considers having her first sexual experience.*

Marley: *Yes, I have told my daughter everything. I was as open and direct with her about my life as possible. I answered her questions about sexuality as very truthfully as I could from my heart. I made a conscious effort to teach her the difference between loving sex and empty sex, to guide her into understanding that there is a difference. My sexual history was difficult and not something to be especially proud of, and I wanted it to be better for her than it was for me.*

In addition, four participants stated that they would tell their adolescent daughter(s) about their adolescent sexuality. Two stated that they had shared some technical, non-personal information already with their daughters regarding menstruation, sexual intercourse, pregnancy, and prevention techniques for sexually transmitted diseases. The reasons given for telling were: (a) "Now that my mother has died, I wish I could have known more personal things about her so I don't want my daughter to have any regrets"; (b) "It would open up the communication between myself and my daughter"; (c) "I would gain more trust between myself and my daughter"; (d) "I am no longer worried about my daughter knowing about my early sexual experiences"; (e) "I believe I would seem more human (a real person) in her eyes if I shared."

Leaving the box open

The findings in this study are conflictual and paradoxical. When we compared the "telling" group to the "remaining silent" group interesting elements emerged. Generally, the "remaining silent" group narrated stories that were more naive and innocent—tales of budding sexuality. In contrast, the "telling" group narrated difficult adolescent sexual experiences that were evocative, violent, or harsh. Theirs were stories of enduring abuse and humiliation—survivor tales. These survivor stories prompted women to transform traditional parenting practices by breaking through the silence. Their willingness to tell was based on their need to educate their daughters, to protect their daughters from sexual predators, to normalize women's sexual experiences, to model openness by sharing their "real selves" with their daughters, and to support their daughters sexual development.

The mothers who chose to remain silent assumed their daughters would not want to know about their adolescent sexual experiences. They believed that "mothers" should be framed as the "good mother," a mother whose sexuality must be kept private to prevent embarrassment, shame, or humiliation. A mother with a sexual identity will lose "respect" or "dignity" and act "inappropriately." Even though they yearn to know about their own mothers' lives, they believed that they must protect their daughters from this side of their own womanhood.

On the other hand, the mothers who chose to tell understood that sharing their adolescent sexual experiences was a teaching tool. There was much for daughters to learn in sharing through the provision of guidance and necessary knowledge for protection in navigating the potentially unsafe sexual terrain of womanhood. They wanted to teach their daughters to avoid feelings of shame or blame as daughters began to express their sexuality. They sought to instill their daughters with a sense of having the right to claim their own sexuality, making their own choices in defining their emerging sexual practices, and a willingness to set sexual boundaries that met their own needs. On this point, we noticed clear differences between the two groups. Those who chose to remain silent considered their role as mother primary and their sexual identity secondary. Those who chose to tell their daughters primarily valued the safety of the emerging sexual development of their daughter(s), willing to put their image as a mother aside. Further, this group of mothers created narratives of resiliency and restitution. Aware of the implications of telling their story, they took, or were willing to take, the risk of losing their privacy, embarrassing themselves, or acting outside the typical "good-mother" discourse. They wanted their daughters to see them as "more real" or "human" and, we suggest, that they understood this holistic view to be protective and essential for their daughter's healthy development.

In our preliminary findings, the participants did not disclose whether their age or the age of their daughters, or whether their race, class, religion, level of education, marital status, or their own sexual orientation had any bearing on whether they would tell or chose to remain silent. It would be beneficial in future research to explore further these demographic variables outside of an exclusively Eurocentric cultural perspective.

This narrative study evokes many questions: What would motherhood look like if the construct was based on a maternal identity in transition—a self-in-process, which evolves and changes along with the developing children and family? How are mother's sexual identities impacted by theorizing motherhood as a stable, or fixed construct over time? Are mothers who choose to keep their sexual identities private buying into this "bedrock" construction of motherhood identity? What effect does this have on their daughters' sexual identities?

At the heart of the distinction between telling or remaining silent is secrecy. What power lies beneath the secrecy of a mother's sexuality? In our opinion, the dominant discourse in popular culture is at play, setting the "good

mother" discourse against women's sexual identity. Walters states that "Western culture has so incorporated the dichotomization of "mother" and "women" that identification with the mother will always imply for the daughter a denial of her own sexuality." (228). At least half of the women in this study were willing to address this issue within the mother-daughter relationship. These women were struggling to step outside the parameters of the mother archetype, embodying both a sexual and maternal identity.

Every mother must struggle with the complex interplay between identity, rights to privacy, and parental responsibilities. It is important to recognize these complexities without foreclosing on any of them as the way mothers "should be." The imperative is to move away from the either/or thinking that the dichotomy of "good-mother" versus sexual woman sets in place. By viewing identity as contingent, contextual, and evolving then the possibilities for mothers are boundless.

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[1]This project must be framed within the historical and political contexts in which these mid-life women experienced their adolescence—a pre-Adrienne Rich and Betty Friedan era. In general, many mothers did not work outside of the home and birth control was not widely available to women as teenagers.

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Cornelia Hoogland

Especially *Oh,* especially *darling*

The girl is in bed with her mother.
Their flannelette nighties leap round their waists
and they make laughing sounds
that like leftover coloured heat in a glass kiln
there are no words for. *Glee*, maybe, or *joy*.
The bed's blue comforter is fat as a cloud.

Stay with the image of cloth fluttering. A cloud
shifting past the sun travelling the length of the ravine
the mother knows lurks outside
like the separation just ahead.
The mother leaving, the daughter staying.
Mountains, prairie, the Great Lakes separating them,
the years of bawling into the black *O* of the telephone.

Nestled here on Miller Avenue
in the last days as well as the
first egg-bursts into the fallopian current
deep in the girl's body,
the mother—before she can haul them back—says
Oh darling girl. Three good words,
the one thing a mother can promise her daughter,
to hold her precious. And then she says,
if you love this you're going to love sex.

What has the daughter done with those words?
Ask her. But the mother—
through the years of bad sex and no sex—clings
to that romp and her self-mothering
especially *Oh*, especially *darling.*

Nicole Pietsch

Un/titled

Constructions of Illegitimate Motherhood as Gender Insurrection

Somehow, illegitimacy has been recognized both historically and contemporarily as a purely female transgression: "there really is no deviance labeling of 'unwed fathers'" (Moorman, 1996: 34). Illegitimate conception represents a gender violation of large and multi-faceted proportion: Within one event, patriarchal notions of femininity, motherhood, family, and sex are simultaneously subverted. In failing to fulfill the "social requirements for at least the image of chastity" (Adams, 1997: 105), perceptions of insubordination and sexuality in the illegitimately pregnant woman become intrinsically and inevitably interwoven.

The unmarried, however pregnant, woman enacts insurrection by transgressing gendered sexual standards: "as parties to the [sexual] system, 'good' women [have] an interest in restraining male sexual impulses, a source of danger to women, as well as their own sexuality" (Vance, 1984: 2). Here, we see that the male party—while present and necessary in procuring conception—has performed no misdemeanor. Yet where "self control and watchfulness" are "major and necessary female virtues" (Vance, 1982: 4), the woman becomes a "refractory girl," whose illegitimately pregnant body stands as "inescapable evidence of the ... consequences of the pleasures of illicit sexual desire" (Reekie, 1997: 79).

When gender functions as a governing and normalizing force in society, those who transgress the standards are constructed as sexual, social and moral deviants. Along racial lines, in addition, this deviancy takes on diverging connotations. In this socio-sexual system, it is easily the illegitimately pregnant woman who takes the blame: since the 1960s, both black and white unwed mothers have been surveyed not only as victims "but rather [as] agents of larger social problems" (Lynn, 2001: 5).

I. Discourse

Let us begin with a definition: a definition applied to mother and child. The word "illegitimate" is defined in two ways. First, it literally signifies one "born of parents not married to each another"; secondly, it is circumscribed as that which is "contrary to law, rules or logic" (*Webster's New World Dictionary*, 1990: 293). The word—and thus label of—'illegitimacy' is revealing. We know that the label 'illegitimacy' as it is ascribed to pregnancy, birth and motherhood today is understood primarily through the above first denotation. However, it is the underlying presence of the second meaning that is nonetheless relevant, operational, and attendant within the construction of notions of "appropriate" reproduction and sexuality among women. The title 'illegitimate' is pejorative wherein it projects "expressions heavily burdened with intended prejudicial meanings" (Solinger, 1992: 358). By definition, an illegitimate pregnancy is a pregnancy conceived "contrary to law, rules or logic"; by implication, the illegitimately pregnant woman is a law-breaker, a recreant, one who actively undermines and topples "the rules." Ideologically, she is non-conformist and lawless: functionally, she is morally, socially and sexually aberrant.

This essay aims to uncover purposes implicit in the categories of il/legitimacy. Where legitimacy is a term and social concept associated with lawfulness and validity, illegitimacy is laden with inferred meaning: incorrect, untitled, and *unentitled*. Feminist post-structuralism theorizes that hegemonic language constructs its subject "by a discourse that weaves knowledge and power" (Alcoff, 1997: 336): within the definitive classification of "illegitimacy," a feminist post-structuralist analysis determines, there dwells an allying discourse that assigns specific qualities and judgements to its subject. It is this discourse that differentiates between "legitimate" (signifying notions of lawfulness, reasonability and conformity [(*Webster's*, 1990: 337-38]) and "illegitimate" (pragmatically, the antagonist towards all that is legitimate). This piece will use a feminist post-structuralist approach to identify and disseminate what this language implicates of its subjects. Further, it will locate historical and popular notions that have contributed to the race-specific conceptualizations of il/legitimacy, as well as the race-specific confounding of il/legitimacy and gender mis/behavior. Indeed, discourses that surround terminology and ideas resonate with inferred, socially situated meaning.

The inscription of deviancy upon the illegitimately pregnant woman is both explicit and hidden. This association has been—historically and today—affixed to unmarried mothers in general. Yet while the impression of gender plays a central role for all illegitimately pregnant women, it is interesting to note how this impression varies along racial lines. Indeed, all unmarried pregnancies symbolize (or at least are socially perceived as) "a costly form of role reversal" (Solinger, 1992a: 35) or gender misconduct; however, how this misbehavior is *received and interpreted* by social commentators regularly depends on the mother's skin color. Specifically, white illegitimacy is understood as individual and accidental: the white unwed mother is a "maladjusted female who could be

cured" (Solinger, 1992a: 152) of her sexual and source gender misconduct. For the black woman, however, deviant femininity, sexual practice and the resultant illegitimate motherhood is understood as an "alleged biological condition of black womanhood" (Solinger, 1992a: 42). These diverging perspectives have—over decades—simultaneously influenced and shaped social policy on abortion, illegitimacy, and reproductive rights. Fundamentally, they have tacitly shaped popular notions on white/black womanhood, "legitimate" motherhood, and racialized sexuality. Where does this belief system begin?

Directly, illegitimacy has historically been defined as a social problem. During the twenty years following the Second World War, North America observed a marked increase in unwed pregnancies, especially within the white middle-class. In the Post-war years, familial, sexual and work relations shifted dramatically along gender and racial lines. The foundation of the American middle-class and white male privilege swayed under changes inflicted by (among others) a growing female workforce, racial desegregation, and the post-war welfare state (Solinger, 1992a: 34-37). Within "postwar interest[s] in preserving or restoring social stability," unmarried pregnant girls "became key symbols of the potential for race and gender insubordination" (Solinger, 1992a: 34) at a time when such disturbances were understood as a snowballing phenomenon. As opposed to recognizing it as symptomatic of a multi-dimensional societal shift, illegitimate pregnancy was instead contrived by social authorities as episodes of individual non-conformity (Solinger, 1992a: 34). Beyond the 1960s, social commentators conceded that unmarried mothers may not be held solely to blame for their dilemma, and began to finger media, weak familial ties, and social attitudes on sex in tandem. Despite this turn, old judgements on "single motherhood" and "illegitimacy" are still evident today. In 1992a, author Rickie Solinger noted that Americans have a positive bearing towards welfare reform legislation, which aims "above all, to end illegitimacy" (241). Contemporary policies on adoption, pro-choice discussions, and welfare still carry the implicit message:

> If you are married, and have a reasonable level of income, you are a more worthy parent than someone who is young, single or impoverished. These things are not said outright, especially in 2001, with our illusion that "things are different now." (Rolfe, 2001: 6)

More insidious, however still attendant, is the social directive of il/legitimate sexual relations, conception and birth. The notion of valid and invalid social and sexual relations are grounded in multi-faceted values on gender-appropriate sexuality: they exist today. It is these social hegemonies that govern female sexuality as a whole, while the case of the illegitimately pregnant woman stands in obvious contrast: she is an example (among many) of female sexual/social deviancy. After all, the illegitimately pregnant woman is everything that the *legitimately* pregnant (that is, sexual and reproductive

within marriage) or single, non-pregnant woman (that is, ostensibly non-sexual) is clearly not. Black or white, representations of the illegitimately pregnant woman construct a subject who demonstrates deviancy by actively disobeying socio-sexual norms. She has reneged her gender category through action: the unwed mother "violate[s] multiple rules concerning femininity and sexuality, marriage and maternity" (Rolfe, 2001: 22). Simply stated, she has committed gender treachery.

II. Performance

Patrick Hopkins's "Gender Treachery: Homophobia, Masculinity and Threatened Identities" delineates the relationship between gender misbehavior and societal intolerance. In an attempt to dismantle homophobia, Hopkins investigates the pervasive and orthodox role of gender within North America. Hopkins attributes contemporary hatred of non-heterosexuals to Western society's general fear of "anyone who violates the 'rules' of gender identity/gender performance" (1991: 13). Hopkins theorizes that political and social "inertia" is antagonized by those—for example, homosexuals, cross-dressers, feminists—who "reject the criteria by which the genders are differentiated" (1991: 13). Hopkins succinctly captures the motive behind societal imperviousness and judgement towards gender deviations:

> A threat to established gender categories, like most other serious threats, is often met with grave resistance, for challenging the regulatory operations of a gender system means to destabilize fundamental social, political, and personal categories ... and society is always prejudiced toward the protection of established categories." (1991: 13)

Like the non-heterosexual, the illegitimately pregnant woman's sexual behavior contradicts common gender expectations. Much as the homosexual male "violates a tenet of masculinity" (Hopkins, 1991: 13). by acting on his sexual orientation, the illegitimately pregnant woman exercises a "social and sexual license that challenge[s] their traditional, subordinate role" (Solinger, 1992a: 35).

The social evaluation of unmarried mothers indeed "stress[es] [gender] role violation" (Solinger, 1992a: 35) alongside sexual misconduct as its fundamental concern. Historical and contemporary theories envision the illegitimately pregnant woman's sexuality as gender treachery in two ways. First, she is seen as mutinous, a rebel who knows the boundaries of female sexual propriety and maternity and actively violates them. Secondly, as the latter part of this essay will detail, psychological theories hypothesized the unmarried mother as a damaged gender invert: a woman victim whose illicit sexual activity and pregnancy is the result of psychic depravity (if she is white), or biology-based pathology (if she is black).

In the first model, the illegitimately pregnant woman commits gender treachery through her own strategy of sexual deviancy. If "the pregnant teenager function[s] as an emblem of sexual-cultural disorder" (Reekie, 1997: 77), then the event of illegitimate conception signifies a female sexuality that is "dangerously uncontrolled and uncontrollable" (Reekie, 1997: 78). She is a social problem, a scepter of femininity gone wrong. Popular representations of the illegitimately pregnant woman construct female sexual deviancy and sexual propriety simultaneously: through this dichotomous portrait, patriarchal notions of womanhood, femininity, reproduction and sexual practice are carefully enforced. The deviant is pathologized, ostracized, supervised; the proper character is oppositely conveyed as a woman engaged in "respectable service" (Reekie, 1997: 79) and thus a goal for the aberrant to realize.

The notion of the aberrant and illegitimately pregnant woman as "Fallen woman" is indeed connected to the maintenance of gender and sexual norms. The Fallen woman is one who, through the isolated misstep of non-marital sexual activity, has caused her own social/moral destruction (Solinger, 1992a: 5): interestingly, this title was attributed to white girls only. Within representations of the Fallen woman, the subject is conveyed not only as anomalous but disobedient: that is, in parallel with her title, the illegitimately pregnant Fallen woman has achieved her predicament via behavior "contrary to law, rules or logic" (*Webster's*, 1990: 293). Much in the way that a 'fall' represents "ruination" following a "yielding to temptation" (Solinger, 1992a: 215), the Fallen woman's active disregard for female sexual norms results in the consequential—if not punitive—downfall of illegitimate conception.

While she is biologically female, the body of the Fallen woman demonstrates a blatant defiance of all that is considered appropriately feminine: it speaks simultaneously of sexual "purity and carnality; ignorance and knowledge; innocence and guilt" (Solinger, 1992a: 215). Consequentially, through her illegitimate pregnancy, the Fallen woman is branded as inherently defiant and disobedient. The apparent defiance attendant in the Fallen woman is discernable in her demeanor and daily relations; paralleling her sexual transgression, she is "characterized as persistently disobedient" (Solinger, 1992a: 215). The "waywardness" of procuring illegitimate conception is equated with a necessarily and thoroughly disobedient female character: "potentially unclean, disorderly, deceitful, disrespectful and corrupt" (Solinger, 1992a: 215). The idea of the misbehaved Fallen woman—whose predicament is a result of her own "gross and public departure from 'good' woman status" (Vance, 1984: 4)—delineates the boundaries of appropriate versus deviant female sexuality.

While both black and white unwed mothers are attributed to sexual deviancy, the black unwed mother receives additional, racially-grounded criticism. While the white woman is seen as socially disobedient for her actions, sexual and gender misconduct in the woman of color is credited with blanket essentialism: the black illegitimately pregnant as an emblem of "black womanhood" and thus "irresponsible hypersexuality" (Solinger, 1992a: 42). Indeed,

both black *and* white pregnant girls have been historically associated with sexual excess—in itself an "unfeminine" quality—however, racist presumptions define this 'excess' as racially imbedded when the 'offender' is non-white. It is interesting to note that when sexual aberrance is identified in a white woman, this is perceived as gender malpractice; occurring in a woman of color, however, this same transgression is furthermore categorized as a marker of inferior race. Here, female sexual activity, illegitimate motherhood, and indulgent misconduct coalesce to create a portrait of black femininity, historically situated in slavery: "purely sexual" and unrestrained "reproductive citizens" (Solinger, 1992a: 49).

III. Duties

Within both popular American culture and social policy, the problem of illegitimacy begins with 'illegitimate' sexual relations. Regularly, the illegitimately pregnant woman, whether white or black, is conceptualized—simultaneously—as sole impetus and victim of her own crisis:

> Notice how the problem is phrased: a woman facing an unplanned pregnancy. The spotlight is focused full tilt on her; she has a problem, and of her own creation ... We never hear of the dilemma of a man facing an unplanned pregnancy. We don't have any moral judgements about this man either ... Somehow she is alone with this problem that took two people to create. (Rolfe, 2001: 5)

Welfare policies, children's bureaus and medical professionals simultaneously encourage and brood over the phenomenon in which "for the most part, all men seem to be forgotten men in studies on illegitimacy" (Solinger, 1992a: 36). Certainly, financial support agencies appeal for these men's contributions: however such policy typically penalizes women, as mothers are required to "produce" (Solinger, 1992a: 36) the child's father before receiving welfare assistance. In policy, social and familial discussions, the issue of illegitimate pregnancy becomes a plainly female problem. The unmarried mother is conceptualized as a girl who "got herself in trouble" (Solinger, 1992a: 35). Yet how is it that she accomplishes this alone? If "trouble" signifies the pregnancy itself, a woman obviously 'got herself' there via heterosexual relations. Despite the cooperative effort required for conception, only one partner is "judged for exercising [the] right to be a sexual being" (Rolfe, 2001: 1).

In *Pleasure and Danger*, author Carol S. Vance draws a relationship between female sexual desire, judgement, and the fear of punishment for its unbridled expression. Women, Vance states, take on a social role as "the moral custodians" of both male behavior and their own sexual desire (Vance, 1984: 4). In a cultural atmosphere where—as a result—women's desire is "suspect from its first tingle," it is understandable that "women's fear of reprisal and punishment for sexual activity has not abated" (Vance, 1984: 4) over time. For the

illegitimately pregnant woman, accidental maternity is the tariff paid for illicit sexual relations. Punishment for the illegitimately pregnant woman is construed as fulfilled in the illegitimate pregnancy itself; that is, accidental conception is understood as a damaging—although appropriate—consequence for a single woman's sexual activity. This idea is reflected in the attitudes of the community as well as the reasoning of the illegitimately pregnant woman herself: "Jean felt that she had 'gotten herself pregnant.' She thought, 'I wanted to die, but he was right. I got what I deserved'" (Solinger, 1992a: 5). Much as illegitimate pregnancy signifies a breach of societal and gender rules, it is simultaneously understood as a measure of discipline, dispensed to the illicitly sexual woman: "pregnancy [is] an incontestable marker of having crossed the line between normal/moral/good and abnormal/immoral/bad" (Adams, 1997: 105). While motherhood is a hegemonic (if not obligatory) marker of femininity, fecundity, and maternity within the illegitimately pregnant body becomes a mark of vice and punishment.

Does the illegitimately pregnant woman stand a chance at salvation? During the 1950s and 1960s, the illegitimately pregnant woman was conceptualized as "a fallen woman to be saved" and a "sexual delinquent to be controlled" (Wegar, 1997: 78): that is to say, through regulation and instruction, her status was considered mutable. Much as an illegitimate pregnancy signifies disobedience and a rejection of the socio-sexual "responsibilit[ies] of a proper woman" (Vance, 1984: 5), the stipulations of redemption require women to "go on to become properly married wives and mothers" (Solinger, 1992: 346). Ultimately, a Fallen woman could atone for her refractory past only by subscribing to patriarchal definitions of womanhood and maternity. We will see that, historically speaking, such "repentance" was both theoretically and practically more accessible for the white woman than for the woman of color.

One way that repentance was achieved for the Fallen woman was through an adoption arrangement for her illegitimate child. Beginning in the post-Second World War era in North America, the rising number of single pregnancies and families willing to adopt helped to create a discourse of deliverance for the white Fallen woman (Solinger, 1992: 346). Through the stain of unwed conception, the illegitimately pregnant woman would be marked; however, through a secreted adoption plan, "the unwed mother could put the mistake—both the baby *qua* baby, and the proof of non-marital sexual experience—behind her" (Solinger, 1992: 346). An adoption arrangement could simultaneously "efface episodes of illicit sex" and conception, while the infant was transferred to a "normative [two-parent, heterosexual] family" (Solinger, 1992: 346). The championing of adoption over single motherhood reiterates the social propriety of heterosexuality (traditional, married partnership), gender (feminized notions of maternity), class and race (the mildly eugenicist assertion that only the financially/morally "fit" may parent) (Wegar, 1997: 78). Pragmatically, through adoption, the white Fallen woman could revoke her sin and the semblance of social normalcy would be restored. At

institutionalized maternity homes, the objective was to literally delete the illegitimate infant from existence, while simultaneously expunging the inmates of their sexual pasts. In this way, each girl was carefully rerouted towards socially acceptable womanhood: while "it was possible to get school credits while in residence, restoring marriageability was considered more important than education" (Solinger, 1990: 50).

Simply stated, the goal was for the girl to return to appropriate white womanhood. Integral in this model was the disavowal of the illegitimate child, and the diametrical acceptance of mandatory, legal, heterosexual union. The message about illegitimacy for the white woman was twofold: not only was it true that "a repentant, reclaimed and purified self could transcend a body temporarily by sin" (Reekie, 1997: 79), but further, within a patriarchal social structure, "outside of marriage neither sex nor the resulting child had 'reality'" (Solinger, 1992: 358). Outside of socially-delineated sexual relations, biological motherhood becomes conditional, and if necessary, obsolete. Even today, white mothers who relinquish their babies become "separate, different than and less than full mothers" (Lynn, 2001: 3).

For those women who did not—or could not—atone for their deviancy in this way, further penalization was common. Such social backlash is prominent in the experiences of black single mothers during the same time period, as well as in contemporary welfare policy on single motherhood in general. Due to a racist and selective adoption market, black illegitimate babies were more difficult to place for adoption in the post-war era; single black women were less willing to place their babies and instead chose to keep (Solinger, 1992: 356). The historical social response to this was punitive:

> Politicians ... argued simply that the mothers were bad and should be punished. The babies were expendable because they were expensive and undesirable as citizens. Public policies could and should be used to punish black unmarried mothers and their children in the form of legislation enabling states to cut them off from welfare benefits and to sterilize and incarcerate 'illegitimate mothers'." (Solinger, 1992: 352)

The black woman's willingness to take on unmarried motherhood was problematic to social authorities, because it conveyed that these women considered their motherhood legitimate and functional despite societal dissension. In the face of systemic racism, poverty and social ostracism, most black women continued onto single motherhood—again, asserting their ability to operate outside of patriarchal and heterosexual institutions. In a response that aimed to degrade black women as mothers, sexual beings, women and members of an already marginalized race, authorities continually made "facile association[s] between black women, sexuality, and crime" (Solinger, 1992a: 34). In addition to blatant racism, the black woman who kept her baby experienced backlash over her choice to mother. The treatment of illegitimate motherhood—an

extension and *acceptance* of illicit sexual activity and conception, no less, is revealing. It is as if the black illegitimate child, in remaining with its mother, remained as "proof" of it's mother's gender misbehavior and sexual practice. Black single mothers of the post-war period were punished regularly by social policy, financial aid, and housing authorities, whose disapproval of their motherhood status represented accusations of sexual, social and maternal misconduct. The black single mother was seen as holistically illegitimate:

> Black unwed mothers were guilty of being without a man, thus in some sense independent, or at least 'on the loose' in a way that violated gender norms ... They were guilty of being extramaritally sexual, again a violation of gender norms, but were also guilty of being mothers, the ultimate gender role fulfillment. (Solinger, 1992a: 53)

Black illegitimacy was fingered by racist society as "a readily employed argument as to asserted Negro inferiority"; yet further to this, it was the black woman who more often chose to raise her child alone. Simultaneously, these women subverted patriarchal, heterosexual and social mandates.

In contemporary welfare policies and discourses, the image of the non-conformist single mother is still operative. How dare she violate social boundaries pertaining to sexuality and motherhood? How dare she ask for financial support from her community (effectively asking for their alliance in her decision)? Her 'deservedness' of social and financial assistance is problematized due to her unlawful maternity, and her child's illegitimacy:

> [In 1955] a two year waiting period [for social assistance] was enforced to ensure that these [single] mothers were 'fit' to care for their children and that they did not continue their 'improper' sexual practices. Eventually this was reduced to three months, but only in October 1991 was this time restriction removed. (Little, 1994: 385)

Indeed, regardless of race, all single, pregnant women were defined and treated as deviants threatening to the social order" (Solinger, 1992a: 3). However, the white unmarried mother could choose to relinquish her child (and thus, her sexual mistakes), while the unmarried woman of color did not have this option. Intrinsic in this model is the notion that relinquished children spawned by illicit conception were "cleared of the charge of inherited moral taint" (Solinger, 1992a: 3) that illegitimacy implicated—and so were their mothers.

IV. Pathology

In a second model, the illegitimately pregnant woman is defined with biology-based pathology. Again, we will see how the white unwed mother's gender and sexual misconduct is seen as mutable, yet the black unwed mother

is not. The white illegitimately pregnant woman has historically been psychoanalyzed as a casualty of mental illness: she is "driven into sex and pregnancy, professionals determined, as a result of both gender dysfunctions and family dysfuctions" (Solinger, 1990: 47). The woman of color, in contrast, is understood as biologically determined: a "permanent victim of [her] sexuality" (Solinger, 1992a: 44). In the cases of both white and black women, the pathologizing of "improper" female sexual practice and gender subversion is revealing.

In "Clitoral Corruption: Body Metaphors and American Doctors' Constructions of Female Homosexuality, 1870-1900," author Margaret Gibson (1997) demonstrates how historical theories on sexual perversion enforced constructed parallels between non-hegemonic female sexual practice, gender subversion, deviancy and mental illness. As Gibson contrasts the gendered "stereotype of the passive, asexual woman" with "cases of obvious female sexuality" such as promiscuity, lesbianism and nymphomania (Gibson, 1997: 13), she illustrates how gender "appropriate" behavior has been historically aligned with sexual practice. Where normal feminine sexuality is believed to be conservative, "circumspect" (Vance, 1984:2), the openly sexual woman "represent[s] a lust that is necessarily masculine" (Gibson, 1997: 113). The illegitimately pregnant woman—a "woman whose sex drive [is] clearly evident" (Gibson, 1997: 112) through her physical state of fecundity—is similarly identified as hypersexual, if not masculinized.

As Gibson notes, "for a woman to be adamantly sexual represented more than a bedroom concern" (1997: 113): through her illicit sexual activity, the illegitimately pregnant woman is diagnosed as fundamentally "conflicted between [her] masculine and feminine drives" (Solinger, 1990: 47). As her sexual practice indicates a subversion of appropriate womanhood/motherhood, the illegitimately pregnant woman "was attributed to sexual excess, in itself a 'masculine' quality" (Gibson, 1997: 123). She is all at once a gender traitor and a bastardization of feminine motherhood. Interestingly, many psychological studies performed on white unwed mothers during the early 1950s looked for evidence that these women "assumed male prerogatives sexually, aesthetically, and otherwise" (Solinger, 1990: 47); these studies identified anomalies in their subjects such as boyish appearance and dress, an aggressive or independent disposition, and feelings of envy towards men" (Solinger, 1990: 47-50). Health practitioners and psychologists hypothesized that the illegitimately pregnant woman's sexual practice (and resulting dilemma) was itself a consequence and culmination of her disordered gender identity: it was "almost as if she denied her femininity by redirecting her sexual energy" " (Solinger, 1990: 47), thus achieving pregnancy. The illegitimately pregnant woman of color was, too, described as gender misappropriated; this was defined, however, as a racial flaw. Biologically speaking, authorities constructed the image of "the black woman as unrestrained, wanton breeder" (Solinger, 1992a: 43): this, commentators ascertained, was determined by body-based and masculinized "hypersexuality."

In the case of the white woman, authorities cited the illegitimately pregnant woman as a victim of psychological disturbance. It is no surprise that authorities and institutions dealing with white single pregnancy at this time acted to reaffirm suitable gender behavior in their subjects as a measure of social—and by implication, sexual—"rehabilitation":

> In the postwar decades, most maternity homes were actively engaged in training unwed mothers to intensify their feminine identification. Most homes offered courses or workshops in the feminine arts of grooming, glamour, charm, beauty, cooking, handwork, and flower arranging before they offered courses with vocational or educational content" (Solinger, 1992a: 50).

The function of the maternity home was not only to hide the single, pregnant woman from her community; it was further employed to regularize the lives of the women who occasioned them. For unwed mothers, the homes became "training schools for wayward girls," and "the training was in femininity" (Solinger, 1992a: 50).

The gender subversiveness of the unmarried mother so disturbed social authorities of the post-war era that even the medical profession was moved to explain it. It was soon conjectured that white girls' sexual activity was symptomatic of a larger, pathological problem. Like Gibson's (1997) "Clitoral Corruption" maintains, mental illness and non-hegemonic expressions of female sexuality are often understood as interconnected. While Gibson's research draws from medical assumptions of the late 1800s, the notion of the "sexual delinquent" is still attendant in studies on illegitimacy from the 1960s. The real connection between sexual practice and insanity, Gibson indicates, is the socially constructed "degeneration of both madness and female sexual passion" (1997: 117). Similarly, for the illegitimately pregnant woman, sexual deviancy (and its prerequisite gender role denunciation) signaled holistic degeneration, including mental illness:

> Personality and character disorders discovered by the professionals included masochism, sadomasochism, severe immaturity, psychopathic tendencies ... Whether the experts understood these disorders as the causes or the wages of unwed motherhood, the implication was clear. [White] females who violated gender-determined sexual norms were routinely designated as formally ill. (Solinger, 1990: 47)

Where gender functions as a governing and normalizing force in society, those who transgress these standards are constructed as sexual, social and mental deviants. For women who depart from their gender category through non-hegemonic sexual practice—such as homosexuals, sex workers, or the illegitimately pregnant woman—pathologization and discipline is typical. As

"disordered" women, white pregnant girls were damaged yet recoverable, and social services scrambled to rehabilitate them towards appropriate femininity.

Unfortunately, for the black illegitimately pregnant woman, there was no recourse. Racist and biologically-fast theories routinely "define[d] unwed black mothers as permanent victims of their sexuality" (Solinger, 1992a: 44). They became emblematic casualties of an 'inferior race' who were worth neither 'treating' nor supporting. This prejudicial attitude placed social authorities in a powerful position to all at once control, discipline, and neglect black single mothers: "biological determinism justified the use of measures to interrupt the fertility of black women" yet "argued against the usefulness of extending social services to black girls and women" (Solinger, 1992a: 44).

V.

She is most unlike expectant women within the institution of marriage. For the single, pregnant woman, the label of illegitimacy is the most penetrating aspect of her condition. Her circumstances—and the practice that lead her to them—are nuanced with judgmental conclusions: she has participated in illegitimate sex, thus effecting illegitimate conception and placing herself en route to illegitimate maternity. Through her gender disloyalty, the illegitimately pregnant woman effects behavior and demeanor that is holistically "contrary to law, rules or logic" (*OWebster's* 1990: 283): she exposes the "rules" or "the limits of what is culturally thinkable about proper sex and motherhood" (Reekie, 1997: 77) by effectively transgressing them.

The illegitimately pregnant woman represents gender treachery and a subversion of patriarchal institutions. The pregnant woman of color represents this and more; yet social commentators of today still fail to perceive that "the biological events that [lead] to an illegitimate pregnancy [are] common to all girls and women, black and white" (Solinger, 1992a: 45). Through the construction and treatment of the unwed mother, we uncover the terms of permissive gender and sexual practice: the single, pregnant woman is "illegitimate" because she has "transgressed against female norms of purity and passivity by engaging in sex without marriage" (Solinger, 1990: 52). While the illegitimately pregnant woman represents an aberrant womanhood, she simultaneously represents the social boundaries of appropriate sexuality and femininity.

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Nicola Bailey, Geraldine Brown, Gayle Letherby, Corinne Wilson

"The Baby Brigade"
Teenage Mothers And Sexuality

In this article we draw on data from a completed project which focused on the general experience and specific housing needs of young mothers in the UK. The research was undertaken by four researchers from the Centre for Social Justice at Coventry University (UK) and was funded by Coventry Health Authority. The impetus for the research was the UK Government's commitment to provide semi-supported housing for all teenage mothers who need it by 2003 and our aim was to talk to young mothers about their housing needs and experience.[1] However, inevitably when talking to people about one particular aspect of their lives they tell you about other related issues *they* consider to be important. We are writing specifically about housing experience and needs and about the more general experience of young motherhood elsewhere but in this paper we concentrate specifically on one aspect of our data—that of "sexuality and young motherhood."

Our data provides an "insider" perspective by giving a voice to a group that is largely excluded from public discussion of family life in general and teenage parenthood in particular. The main body of this article is divided into two main sections. In "Dominant Discourses of Young Motherhood: an "outsiders"" perspective" we consider how the experience of young motherhood is characterized by moral and political discourses which position this experience as "other" to the "norm." In "Young Motherhood in Coventry: an "insiders' discourse" we focus on the experience of our respondents. After briefly outlining our methods and some methodological concerns we consider how dominant discourses affect young mothers" experience. Finally, we end with a "Reflections" section where we reflect on the data and on the project. Within this we consider the complex relationship between the "insider" and "outsider" perspectives.

Dominant discourses of young motherhood: an "outsiders" perspective

It is possible to argue that young mothers' experience of motherhood is affected by various discourses. Foucault (1980, 1984) suggests that discourses are historically variable ways of specifying knowledge and truth and that through discourses we are encouraged to see what is and what is not "the truth." As Ransom notes, for Foucault: "Discourses are not merely linguistic phenomena, but are always shot through with power and are institutionalized as practices" (1993: 134).

Thus, power is constituted in discourses and it is in discourses that power lies. The dominant discourses of motherhood affect all women whether they are mothers or not:

> In western society, all women live their lives against a background of personal and cultural assumptions that all women are or want to be mothers and that for women motherhood is proof of adulthood and a natural consequence of marriage or a permanent relationship with a man. (Letherby, 1994: 525)

So motherhood is something that all women are expected to do, but only in the "right" social, economic and sexual circumstances. Thus, as DiLapi (1989) argues there is a hierarchy of motherhood and teenage mothers along with lesbian mothers, older mothers, disabled mothers, non-biological mothers and so on are defined as "inappropriate." As Kent (2000) notes the legal and social concept of the "child" which has developed in modern society became divorced from sexuality and this has meant that it is particularly difficult to acknowledge the emotional and physical capacity of teenagers for sexual activity. Ironically, a teenage girl seeking an abortion may be seen as acting responsibly whereas this is often seen as a selfish and heartless option in an older married woman. Young mothers are not only stereotyped as a burden on the state (see, for example, Phoenix, 1991) but despite evidence to the contrary (see Phoenix, 1991; Ussher, 2000) teenage mothers are stereotyped as bad mothers and their children severely disadvantaged. As Kent (2000) adds in both cases it is the so-called loose morals of these women which is in question and in each case moral discourses are harnessed to define the "competent"/"incompetent" and/or "fit"/"unfit" mother.

Arguably though it is not the age of the woman that is the primary issue but the fact that younger pregnant girls/women are more likely to give birth outside marriage. Hollway (1994) suggests that the *Male Sex Drive* discourse and the *Have/Hold* discourse each affect the dominant views of young unmarried mothers. The *Male Sex Drive* discourse implies that men have biological urges/and women's sexual needs are subservient to this male sex drive. Moore and Rosenthal drawing on Hollway suggest that: "According to this discourse, women who openly exhibit an interest in sex are considered to be inferior and

amenable to exploitation, as loose women who deserve all they get" (1993: 87).

The *Have/Hold* discourse on the other hand implies that sex is only considered appropriate within a committed heterosexual relationship sanctioned by marriage. Young motherhood then marks women as sexually active and as "inappropriate" mothers (DiLapi 1989) and women.

This is ironic because as Lawson and Rhodes notes: "In many cultures, over many centuries, teenage pregnancy and childbirth have been a normal reproductive pattern" (cited in Bernardes, 1997: 107).

Although teenage pregnancy is not a recent phenomenon, politically it is an issue that is receiving more attention than ever before. Arguably this is due to the fact that teenage mothers are becoming increasingly reliant on the state for provision of money and housing rather than bringing up their children within the patriarchal family unit (Phoenix, 1991). Teenage pregnancy is regarded as "often a cause and a consequence of social exclusion" (Teenage Pregnancy, 1999: 17). This notion has led to an abundance of research focusing on "preventing teenage pregnancy and alleviating the direct negative health and social effects of teenage pregnancy" (NHS CRD, 1997: 2). Within the UK this focus on prevention can be argued to be a direct result of the link between teenage pregnancy and social exclusion and statistical evidence that "The United Kingdom has the highest rate of teenage conception in Western Europe" (TPSE, 2001: 1).

Political discourse then individualizes the problems of teenage motherhood due to the focus on age rather than an examination of the structural factors that affect young peoples' lives (Phoenix, 1991). While the Labour Government has in some ways attempted to highlight structural inequalities that affect young people experiencing teenage pregnancy and parenthood, government initiatives can reinforce negative images. By placing the issue of teenage pregnancy and parenthood under the remit of the Social Exclusion Unit, the UK Government is recognizing that there can be a detrimental impact on the lives of those involved. But this can also reinforce the pervading notion that teenage pregnancy leads to an inevitable exclusion from mainstream society.

Young motherhood in coventry: an "insiders" perspective

> The negative focus is produced by people who are not, themselves, "young mothers" but rather outsiders. There is generally disjunction between "outsider" and "insider" perspectives. (Phoenix, 1991: 86)

Methods and methodology

With this in mind our aim was to undertake a grounded study focusing on the views and experience of young mothers themselves. Our respondent groups consisted of 29 individuals (including one man—a partner of one of our female respondents who wanted to be involved). Respondents' ages ranged between 15 and 25: ten were under 18 when we spoke to them, and 18 were under 25 years

of age. Eight of our respondents were living or had previously lived in semi-supported housing, others were living in their parental home or in private or council housing. Approximately a third of those we spoke to had a long-term partner.

The research team undertook five focus group interviews with eighteen respondents in total. Some of these took place in respondents" homes, some in day centres. Focus group interviews gave respondents the opportunity to share not only practical information but also to identify commonalities and differences in their experiences and to reflect on these. The women who took part in the focus groups viewed the experience positively. Helen's comment is typical: "It's nice to have someone just sit and listen to us."

The research team also undertook ten one-to-one interviews. Interviews were conducted with four young mothers who are under 18 and six under 25. All of these interviews took place in respondents' homes. Single interviews enabled young women who did not feel comfortable sharing their experiences with other respondents a chance to contribute to the research. These women, like those involved in focus groups, spoke about the importance of being listened to. Furthermore, one-to-one interviews added another dimension to the research as one interviewee was joined by her partner (Paul) who shared his experiences of being a young father: "No-one's really asked me what I thought... it's all around young single mums. I'm not saying that's not important but...."

One-to-one interviewing and small focus group work allow researchers to explore issues in greater depth than would be possible with larger groups (Gilbert, 1993). Furthermore, as Stanley and Wise note "the best way to find out about people's lives is for people to give their own analytic accounts of their own experiences" (1993: 167).

Data and discussion

> We must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies. Discourse transmits and produces power: it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it feasible and makes it possible to thwart it. (Foucault, 1984: 100)

So, where there is power there is resistance and resistance to power comes through new discourses. These produce new truths—"counter discourses" which oppose dominant truths. Attention to the accounts of the women in our study suggests that here (as in other areas) it is hard for a stigmatized and marginalized group to resist the dominant discourse.

All of the young women that we spoke to reported feeling that they were

being judged by others. Clearly, the dominant discourses that characterise the "outsider" perspective impinge on young women's experience. Many respondents spoke negatively about their relationships with midwives, nurses, doctors, health visitors, and doctors' receptionists. For example, Marie who did not realise that she was pregnant until late in her pregnancy felt that the midwife who confirmed her pregnancy was both patronising and brusque. Elizabeth had a very negative experience at the Women's Health and Information Centre and was told by the abortion counsellor that she would "end up a single mum, claiming benefits for the rest of her life living in a flat in Hillfields [very rundown local area]." Significantly, several young women did not attend antenatal clinics and parentcraft classes because they felt that they would be subject to negative reactions from staff and other women. For example Tina said: "I didn't go, I should've though but I felt that if I went people would look at me all the time. I just didn't want to go."

These fears were confirmed by some of the women who did attend such classes. Leanne said:

> *I think we need more support because I went to parental classes but it was horrible because I felt I got looked down on because everyone there was in their 20s or 30s. I didn't like it so I didn't go again ... I think there should be separate classes for younger mums.*

As Thomas argues dissatisfaction with maternity services in the UK has a long history:

> While earlier research had concentrated on some women's underuse of the services ... a series of later studies sought to explore women's experiences of both antenatal care and of labour itself.... Central themes of this research have been the contrast between the perspectives of those who use the services and those who provide them ... or conflicts with the image of pregnancy as presented by health care providers. (1998: 44)

There have been some recent positive developments. For example the *Changing Childbirth Report* (Department of Health, 1993) recommends that "the childbearing woman should be fully involved in choosing her care, and thus enabled to feel involved and empowered" (Weaver, 2000). However, although the implication of this is that pregnant women themselves inform maternity services both Thomas (1993) and Weaver (2000) detail remaining tensions. Our data adds another dimension to their critique.

On "breaking the news" of their pregnancy a large number of our respondents also experienced an initial negative reaction from families and partners. Alison and Sandra were both thrown out of the family home, Louise's parents argued, blaming each other for Louise's pregnancy and several others

were encouraged by parents to have an abortion. Clearly as pregnancy and motherhood in young women is often seen as a stigmatizing condition it is treated with pity and disdain which as Pfeffer and Woollett note "are the hallmarks of socially stigmatizing conditions" (1983: 82). We would suggest that also significant here is the fact that young motherhood stigmatizes a family rather than "just" an individual. Although, not considered in our research we would also suggest that because of the double standard of the *Have/Hold* discourse the impact on the families of young fathers is likely to be less significant. Clearly then the stigma of teenage pregnancy coupled with other "outsider" discourses affect young mothers relationships with family members as well as those with others outside of the family.

Ironically, those women in our respondent group who were in relationships found it hard to stay with their partners. Those who were living at home sometimes found that their parents were not as supportive of their relationships as they would have liked. For example, Leanne said that "living at home put a strain on our relationship because he could not stay the night and he had to leave at certain times." Another respondent who lived unofficially with her partner felt that she could not afford to divulge this information to the various authorities, as it would mean an immediate reduction in her state benefits.[2] With reference to the benefit system, housing issues and the associated problem of couples staying together, Paul said: "It is hypocritical that all we ever hear about is families and that my family was almost forced to split up by the lack of support we received. They want people to be families but we get no help ... that's not right is it?"

Moore and Rosenthal (1992) suggest that the relationship between dominant discourses and young people's views of appropriate and inappropriate sexual behavior is complex. This is supported by our study in that the young women we spoke to hoped for marriage and "traditional" family life even though they resisted the negative, stereotypical characterization of them and their family relationships.

All of the women we spoke to experienced concerns regarding safety, danger and harassment. The following accounts are typical of many of the young women we spoke to who were well aware of the stigma and stereotyping attached to young motherhood:

> ... *but the problem is you get so much shit off people ... I don't want to be part of this community if they're going to make us feel shit all the time. My own family don't treat me like that.* (Melanie)

> ... *they look at you like you are a slag or something. No one smiles at you or anything, they just give you dirty looks.* (Sandra)

Sometimes the problem was worse for those women living in semi-supported housing who also report harassment and abuse from other residents'

visitors. Related to this is the fact that living in semi-supported housing identifies the women as teenage mothers which highlights them as a focus for harassment. As Melanie said "They call us the baby brigade."

All of this accords with Lees (1986, 1989, 1993) work on girls and sexuality. Lees suggest that discourses on adolescent sexuality are overwhelmingly characterized by double standards. A girl's reputation can be negatively affected by sexual activity whereas a boy's is only enhanced. Girls as well as boys are likely to hold these views:

> I would think that she is too easy, not a slut but I would say she doesn't feel anything.... People say we should be equal and the same, but the fact is it is not. For a man to have many sexual partners is okay but for a girl to have many sexual partners, she is considered pretty low and a guy is considered what a man, a stud. He has had some experience, he is great. (16-year-old girl from Lees 1996 study cited in Moore and Rosenthal 1993: 12)

Furthermore, whereas the sexual activity of many young women may be the subject of discussion and ridicule once a women is pregnant her pregnancy and child become a symbol of her "inappropriate" sexual behavior. All of this is ironic as recent studies suggest that girls are coerced into sex with boys in order to "prove" their heterosexuality (e.g., see Martin, 2002).

Dominant "outsider" discourses are pervasive then. For our respondents this was also the case with respect to maternal care. All respondents felt intense pressure to be "perfect" mothers and felt that yet again they were being judged by others. For example, Elizabeth said: "It's like when I'm on the bus and she starts crying and I see people looking and I know they think because I'm young I'm not a good mum."

Mary said: "The hospital are doing tests to see if my son has got Chrones' disease. His dad blames me and says it's all my fault."

These young women then felt the stigma of young motherhood: as unmarried young mothers they felt keenly not only that others would judge them in terms of their sexual behavior but also find their mothering skills wanting. Indeed, it is hard to resist these dominant "outsider" discourses and the "insider" perspective itself appears at times self-judgmental. As Cheryl said: "From the moment my baby wakes up until he goes to bed I don't leave his side. I feel I have to be with him all the time."

Smart argues that nineteenth-century discourses of law, combined with medicine and social science brought into being a "problematic feminine subject" in need of "surveillance, regulation and tutelage." Specifically with reference to motherhood she argues that: "... the concept of motherhood implies the terms and conditions under which mothering is deemed appropriate (1992: 30-31).

Smart adds that this construction of women's bodies as unruly and as a

continual source of potential disruption to the social order has enabled the development of more "sophisticated and flexible mechanisms for imposing restraint and achieving desired docility" (1992: 30-31). Our research highlights this well. Yet, like Smart (1992) we would argue that it is important not to characterise women as inevitably oppressed. There is always resistance and challenge or as Foucault suggests "counter discourses" (1980, 1984). With reference to the young women to whom we spoke, despite the pressures they feel, many of them talked positively about being a mother. For example:

> *It's great I love it. She's really good, she hasn't got any teeth yet but she's doing all the other things, crawling, pulling herself up the stairs, trying to walk...* (Tina)

> *Yes I love her and everything, I'm glad I had her when I did. I don't regret it... I'm glad I had her when I was young... she's not much trouble really.* (Sandra)

> *I had her three days after my 16th birthday so she was a nice present.* (Louise)

Reflections

Our data suggests that the "outsider" perspective of young motherhood is hard to resist. Young mothers themselves are drawn into accepting aspects of the "outsider" perspective and their experiences of motherhood are framed within dominant discourses. This is reinforced by the latest UK Government policy initiatives. As previously mentioned within these policies there is a recognition of support needs, however prevention is paramount:

> For example, while the Supporting Families Green Paper offers many tempting morsels to those who would wish to see the development of some form of family policy, closer examination suggests that it has a strong social control agenda embedded within the rhetoric. (James and James, 2001: 224).

This reinforces the view that the sexual activity that young women engage in is inappropriate and that this sexual "promiscuousness" automatically marks them as "bad mothers." Yet, it is important not to suggest that young motherhood is a totally negative experience. Like Phoenix (1991) we found that young mothers distance themselves from some of the negative assumptions associated with young motherhood. Yet, we would add that although young mothers resist aspects of the negative dominant discourse they accept and aspire to other aspects of it. Thus, the "insider" perspective is not a simple rejection of the "outsider" view but a complex mixture of acceptance and resistance.

Particularly significant in policy terms is the danger of the social exclusion

of young mothers (and their children) due to being pregnant as a teenager and being a teenage parent. Structural factors and the prevailing "common-sense" view that teenage pregnancy is not appropriate have wide ranging consequences: "Families do not exist in a vacuum, isolated from each other. They are ... profoundly affected by their social and material environment" (Coote *et al.*, 1998: 113).

As a vulnerable group pregnant teenagers, teenage mothers and their partners and children need support but any support that is offered needs to acknowledge that this group is not inactive or inarticulate. Therefore, policy changes and initiatives need to take into account the "insider" discourse. In concluding our report for Coventry Health Authority one of our recommendations was that further research was needed not least in the area of young mothers experience of antenatal and postnatal services. We have just begun a project on this issue funded by two local health authorities (including Coventry). It seems then that the "insider" discourse is being taken seriously.

[1]"Semi-supported" housing is generally understood to be living accommodation in a shared housing complex with other young mothers. A variety of practical, educational and emotional support is provided to residents.
[2]We did not name this particular respondent for fear of identification.

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Caroline Woidat

Rite of Passage

her new bike
is a Schwinn
five-speed
not red
but raspberry

she swings
a leg
and mounts
with ease
the frame
built
for a girl
without
that bar
in the way

the seat
is still high
her feet
just reach
the pedals

she stretches
with each push
and races
down the street
moving
farther away

from the crowd
in the driveway
watching
her go

she worries
her chain
will slip
the first time
she tries
to shift
and listens
as the gears
rattle

Marie Aline Seabra Ferreira

The Sexual Politics of Human Cloning
Mothering and Its Vicissitudes

In this essay I wish to consider the sexual politics of human cloning in relation to alternative visions of motherhood and analyse some of the ways in which the advent of cloning might help change women's lives. Cloning will be seen to possess the potential to contribute to the encouragement of social equality and to the destabilisation of the long-standing patriarchal "economy of the Same," as Luce Irigaray describes it (1990: 74) or, alternatively, to become a genetic weapon of further oppression. The question thus becomes: will the availability of human cloning benefit women or, on the contrary, contribute to the perpetuation of their subordination to a still male-dominated medical and scientific establishment?

While some feminists see the prospect of the implementation of human cloning as a threat to women, in the sense that it might rob them, as they see it, of their only source of power, the unique gift of motherhood, cloning might, on the other hand, enable both men and women to have their cloned offspring independently of either, thus potentially contributing to a greater equality as far as sex roles are concerned.[1] The still dominant perception that women are fundamentally child-carers would undergo a gradual change, since with the introduction of cloning and the development of artificial wombs men and women would be equally able to have their children with or without a companion of the opposite or the same sex. I believe these alterations, which would be operative at both a biological and a psychological level, would slowly create the conditions for similar job and career opportunities for both sexes, since women would not be limited by their anatomy to becoming mothers only by following the traditional modes of reproduction, unless they so chose. The gradual implementation of these new techniques would inevitably create a very different perception of parenting potential, which in turn would lead to a

wholly distinct psychological map for humanity. This new context could no longer be articulated in terms of Freudian explanatory principles as far as human traumas, drives, perversions and taboos are concerned, but would come to reflect radically altered family, social, political and urban circumstances.

I would like to argue thus that recent developments in reproductive technologies might, provided that women struggle to attain their legitimate place as active agents in the decision-making processes, where they are glaringly under-represented, decisively pave the road to concrete and far-reaching changes to women's lives. These new techniques, amongst which I will stress human cloning, have opened up the prospect of a revolutionary change in the way we consider sex roles and gendered conceptions of individuality, although a future society that included cloning technology would foreseeably look very different if envisioned by a woman or by a man. Indeed, as Gena Corea pertinently notes, "in the realm of cloning, as in most reproductive technology, the male is seen as the active principle in reproduction, the female the passive" (1985: 261). She suggests that if it ever became possible, cloning might be predominantly used to promote male urges to self-generate, circumventing the woman's participation. As Corea remarks, "this is the classic patriarchal myth of single parenthood by the male" (1985; 260), a scenario which is given fictional illustration in, for instance, Fay Weldon's *The Cloning of Joanna May* (1989) and in Anna Wilson's *Hatching Stones* (1991). I wish to contest this view by offering and critically examining instances of women's reflections around such visions. I have to acknowledge, however, that it seems likely that if men retain the control of sexual politics, given that they will inevitably be reshaped by these novel reproductive conditions, it seems likely that the feasibility of human cloning and the introduction of ectogenetic births[2] might be used to the furthering of a masculinist political agenda and not be put at the service of women's goals and aspirations.

Since my emphasis in this essay falls on the potential benefits the participation of women in the technological arena may bring to women's lives, I situate myself clearly on the side of such "technophiles," to borrow Nancy Lublin's word (1998: 23), as Shulamith FirEstone and Donna Haraway, whose theories I will privilege to help buttress my argument. Lublin defines feminist technophilia as a "veneration for technology because of the belief that it will free women from the burden of reproduction, the primary source of our oppression" and "technophiles" as those feminist thinkers "who are enthusiastic about the supposedly emancipatory nature of technology" (1998: 23). Opposed to these technophiles stand the technophobes, who believe that intervention in reproductive technologies is inherently anti-women. Feminists like Susan Griffin (1984), Mary Daly (1986), and Adrienne Rich (1992) emphasize woman's arguably closer connection with nature and celebrate women's bodies as the source of pleasure and not of oppression, indeed as weapons in the struggle for liberation, in direct opposition to Firestone's (1972) and Haraway's (1991) argumentation, a position I consider reductionist and essentialist.[3]

Shulamith Firestone's utopian vision

In her radical feminist book *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (1970), significantly dedicated to Simone de Beauvoir, for whom woman's biology and reproductive capacities were also the main causes of her oppression, Shulamith Firestone put forward the general outlines for a future society where women would have the same privileges and prerogatives as men, not being "slaves" to their biological destiny, passive vessels and "two-legged wombs," to use Margaret Atwood's haunting description of women in *The Handmaid's Tale* (1991:146). Not surprisingly, Firestone advocated as an unavoidable cornerstone of her vision the absolute necessity of freeing women "from the tyranny of their biology by any means available, and the diffusion of the childbearing and childrearing role to the society as a whole, to men and other children as well as women" (1972: 238), in what would amount to a radical rewriting of Freud's script according to which "anatomy is destiny." Firestone's book recognizes a causal relation between woman's biology, her reproductive capabilities, and the sexual division of labour. In her political subordination to men, women can be equated to the working class in capitalist society. Using Marx (1976) and Engels's (1986) dialectical and materialist method to analyse the "dynamics of sex war" (Firestone, 1972: 2) and the conditions necessary to effect a feminist revolution, Firestone at the same time criticizes what she considers as the shortcomings of the communist theory as far as the oppression of women as a group in the arena of the class struggle is concerned. As she remarks, "an economic diagnosis traced to ownership of the means of production, even of the means of *re*production, does not explain everything. There is a level of reality that does not stem directly from economics" (1972: 5).

As an alternative, Firestone suggests developing a "materialist view of history based on sex itself" (1972: 5), performing an analysis "in which biology itself—procreation—is at the origin of the dualism" (1972; 8), the sex dualism that is represented by the two categories of woman and man. As Firestone pertinently argues, "unlike economic class, sex class sprang directly from a biological reality: men and women were created different, and not equally privileged" (1972: 8). As she goes on to stress, "although, as de Beauvoir points out, this difference of itself did not necessitate the development of a class system—the domination of one group by another—the reproductive *functions* of these differences did" (1972: 8). It is in this context that, drawing on Biblical imagery, Firestone praises the liberating potential of technology, stressing that the double curse "that man would toil by the sweat of his brow in order to live, and woman would bear children in pain and travail" (1972: 242) would be lifted through technology. As Nancy Chodorow in related vein argues: "Women's mothering is central to the sexual division of labor. Women's maternal role has profound effects on women's lives, on ideology about women, on the reproduction of masculinity and sexual inequality, and on the reproduction of particular forms of labor power. Women as mothers are pivotal actors in the sphere of social reproduction" (1984: 11).

For women to repossess their bodies, Firestone argues, a formidable upheaval in societal structures and engagement with technology is fundamental. Pushing further the parallels with Marxism she has been using, Firestone forcefully declares that:

> Just as to assure elimination of economic classes requires the revolt of the underclass (the proletariat) and, in a temporary dictatorship, their seizure of the means of *production*, so to assure the elimination of sexual classes requires the revolt of the underclass (women) and the seizure of control of *reproduction*: not only the full restoration to women of ownership of their own bodies, but also their (temporary) seizure of control of human fertility—the new population biology as well as all the social institutions of childbearing and childrearing. (1972: 10-11)[4]

In polemical vein, Firestone goes on to maintain that "the end goal of feminist revolution must be ... not just the elimination of male *privilege* but of the sex *distinction* itself: genital differences between human beings would no longer matter culturally" (1972: 11).

Firestone further elaborates on this revolutionary vision putting forward what she considers as the desirable measures that would have to be implemented in order to achieve her blueprint for an egalitarian, socialist-feminist society. Firestone's insistence on the possibility of divorcing motherhood from being solely attached to woman is translated into her anticipatory fantasy according to which:

> The reproduction of the species by one sex for the benefit of both would be replaced by (at least the option of) artificial reproduction: children would be born to both sexes equally, or independently of either, however one chooses to look at it; the dependence of the child on the mother (and vice versa) would give way to a greatly shortened dependence on a small group of others in general, and any remaining inferiority to adults in physical strength would be compensated for culturally. The division of labor would be ended by the elimination of labor altogether (cybernation). The tyranny of the biological family would be broken. (1972:11)

As Firestone cogently observes, the end of the tyranny of the biological family would also spell the cessation of the "psychology of power" (1972: 11) on which it is grounded. Female biology, then, would no longer mean motherhood as the only destiny open to most women.

This amounts indeed to a revolutionary vision, contested by, amongst others, Adrienne Rich who, in spite of her anti-technological stance, similarly engages with Marxist rethoric in terms which are strongly reminiscent of

Firestone's when she argues:

> The repossession by women of our bodies will bring far more essential change to human society than the means of production by workers. The female body has been both territory and machine, virgin wilderness to be exploited and assembly-line turning out life. We need to imagine a world in which every woman is the presiding genius of her own body. (1972: 230)

Unlike de Beauvoir (1977) and Firestone, however, Rich (1992) considers the experience of motherhood as a fundamental reservoir of pleasure and power. According to Rich, not only do not women's biology and her reproductive capacities necessarily lead to oppression, but they can be a potent source of *jouissance*, of libidinal pleasure, an aspect which is not taken into account either by de Beauvoir or Firestone. In turn, Christine Battersby's argument in *The Phenomenal Woman* (1998) works as a partial corrective to de Beauvoir's and Firestone's demand for a radical alteration of and alternative to the vision and representation of woman's body as exclusively devoted to pregnancy and maternity. Battersby's feminist metaphysics includes "an emphasis on birth" (1998: 4) and, in her book, Battersby explores "the theoretical grounding of a self which is born" (1998: 4). As Battersby acknowledges, "women have very good reasons to feel uncomfortable with any attempt to link female identity to reproductive capacities" (1998: 5). However, as she goes on to asssert, "the hypothetical link between 'woman' and 'birth' that matters is 'If it is a male human, it cannot give birth', not 'If it is a female human, it can give birth'" (1998: 4). Battersby further argues that "the dominant metaphysics of the West have been developed from the point of view of an identity that cannot give birth, so that birthing is treated as a deviation of the 'normal' models of identity—not integral to thinking identity itself" (1998: 4). What I wish to stress here, in response to Christine Battersby's feminist metaphysics, is the need to start theorizing the patterns of individuation and identity of a being who might literally not be born,[5] but rather develop inside an artificial womb.[6]

The fact that there are two virtually opposed views about women's reproductive powers and how society should deal with them, however, does not mean that Firestone's (1972) radically new concept of woman's role in society cannot coexist with more traditional feminine participation in procreation and childrearing. On the one hand, there are those feminist thinkers who, like Adrienne Rich (1992), see woman's biology and her childbearing responsibilities as conducive to a sense of empowerment over their own bodies and, to a certain extent, over men. However, in this respect we need to ask why, then, in spite of the traditional sacralization of motherhood, women are very often drastically restricted in their societal expectations precisely because of those very reproductive capabilities. As Rosalind Pollack Petchesky pertinently asks:

> Can feminism reconstruct a joyful sense of childbearing and maternity without capitulating to ideologies that reduce women to a maternal essence? Can we talk about morality in reproductive decision-making without invoking the spectre of maternal duty? (1998: 79)

It is these problems that both Firestone (1972) and Haraway (1991), in their different theoretical strategies and practical suggestions, try to solve.

"Not of woman born"

Donna Haraway's "ironic political myth" (1991:149) of which the cyborg is the main protagonist, provides a series of helpful ideas that can be said to roughly work in the same direction as some of the possibilities that human cloning holds for women in terms of a political strategy to help furthering their position in a masculinist society.

According to Haraway, cyborgs[7] "have more to do with regeneration and are suspicious of the reproductive matrix of most birthing" (1991: 181), a scenario that is dramatized in for instance Marge Piercy's Mattapoinsett section in *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1983) and Lisa Tuttle's (1998) "World of Strangers," where "the reproductive matrix of most birthing" is deconstructed. I thus situate my argument about the potentially empowering consequences for women of human cloning along the lines laid down by Haraway, who describes her cyborg myth as being about "transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities which progressive people might explore as one part of needed political work" (1991:154).

Donna Haraway analyzes scientific discourses as both constructed and as "instruments for enforcing meanings" (1991: 164). In tune with Firestone (1972), Haraway argues that "one important route for reconstructing socialist-feminist politics is through theory and practice addressed to the social relations of science and technology, including crucially the systems of myth and meanings structuring our imagination" (1991: 163). The relations between science and technology constitute a material reality which women need to be aware of—not fear or disparage. These relations are "rearranging" categories of race, sex and class; feminism needs to take this into account. Indeed, Haraway's analysis of "women in the integrated circuit" tries to suggest, without relying too much on the category of "woman" (as a natural category), that as technologies radically restructure "life" on earth, "women" do not, and are not, through education and training, learning to control these technologies, to "read these webs of power" (1991: 170). A socialist-feminist politics must therefore address these restructurings. As Haraway pertinently points out: "Who controls the interpretation of bodily boundaries in medical hermeneutics is a major feminist issue" (1991: 160). Her often reiterated exhortation for women to participate in the making of science is inextricably linked with the control of webs of power, since it is "the production of science and technology that constructs scientific-technical discourses, processes, and objects" (1991: 169) and is instrumental in

the creation of "the new world, just as it has participated in maintaining the old one" (1991: 68).

In related vein, Haraway addresses the issue of women's victimization, remarking that the traditional plots that shape western culture

> are ruled by a reproductive politics—rebirth without flaw, perfection, abstraction. In this plot women are imagined either better or worse off, but all agree they have less selfhood, weaker individuation, more fusion to the oral, to Mother, less at stake in masculine autonomy, a route that does not pass through Woman, Primitive, Zero, the Mirror Stage and its imaginary. It passes through women and other present-tense, illegitimate cyborgs, *not of Woman born*, who refuse the ideological resources of victimization so as to have a real life. (1991: 177) [emphasis mine]

Haraway's discussion of cyborg politics, although not referring to human cloning in particular, can be said to pertinently apply and buttress the argument I have been developing here. She states: "Sexual reproduction is one kind of reproductive strategy among many, with costs and benefits as a function of the system environment. Ideologies of sexual reproduction can no longer reasonably call on notions of sex and sex role as organic aspects in natural objects like organisms and families" (1991: 162). From this perspective, then, human cloning, I believe, can be seen as a potentially liberating alternative to the rigid boundaries imposed on women by those ideologies of sexual reproduction.

Firestone's "cybernetic feminism" (1972: 238) and Haraway's vision of a "socialist-feminist culture" (150) can then be brought together in a productive symbiosis which will help us reflect on the fictional works named above which, through prophetically anticipating many medical and technological procedures and their repercussions on human life will provide an invaluable imaginative blueprint with which to critically assess imminent developments and their implications as far as the sexual politics of the near future are concerned.

Women's science, women's bodies

The discourse of science has been the object of scrutiny on the part of many feminist critics, who have seen it as heavily male gendered and catering mostly to male political agendas. Evelyn Fox Keller (1984) and Sandra Harding (1992) are amongst the most influential critics of what they see as the sexist way science has operated so far. Drawing principally on the work of Nancy Chodorow (1984) and Dorothy Dinnerstein (1976), one of Evelyn Fox Keller's main arguments is that the predominant philosophy of science practices and techniques is strongly masculine and individualistic. In order to counterbalance that attitude Fox Keller, like Haraway, calls for a greater participation of women in the research and practice of science so that those sexist paradigms can be changed.[8]

Sandra Harding, for her part, argues for the need "to produce a feminist science—one that better reflects the world around us than the incomplete and distorting accounts provided by traditional social science" (1992: 318), taking into account the specifics of gender, race and class, which inevitably give form to one's experience of the world around us. Following on from this insight, Harding defends a type of scientific practice based on an ethics of care, of greater relational habits not grounded on exploitation and, like Fox Keller, alerts women to the need for a more active agency in the construction and practice of science.

Evelyn Fox Keller's (1992) notion of a gender-neutral science found a strongly receptive echo in many feminist activists, who demand the kind of policy that will be sympathetic to women's needs and aspirations. Indeed, as Catherine MacKinnon contends, in order for women to achieve greater control of their bodies and hence a greater political power to subvert male domination, they should be able to start exerting that control earlier. As she insists: "If women are not socially accorded control over sexual access to their bodies, they cannot control much else about them" (1993: 616).

In this context, I believe the possibility of having their own cloned child would be a potential way to possess greater control over their bodies and reproductive choices, as I suggested above. As Michelle Stanworth in related vein notes, the

> thrust of feminist analysis has been to rescue pregnancy from the status of the "natural"—to establish pregnancy and childbirth not as a natural condition, the parameters of which are set in advance, but as an accomplishment which we can actively shape according to our own ends. ... In the feminist critique of reproductive technologies, it is not technology as an *artificial* invasion of the human body that is at issue—but whether we can create the political and cultural conditions in which such technologies can be employed by women to shape the experience of reproduction according to their own definitions. (1987: 34-35)

Indeed, it is never too much to stress that cloning would only be fully empowering for women if it went on a par with social and economic independence, as well as political parity, so as to ensure that women's problems would receive the adequate amount of attention that would go with appropriate representation in the institutional organs with power of decision. This aspect is equally stressed by Michele Barrett who, in *Women's Oppression Today* (1980), observes that "the way in which the biology of human reproduction is integrated into social relations is not a biological question: it is a political issue" (1980: 76).

Similar concerns are articulated by Firestone who acknowledges that

> though the sex class system may have originated in fundamental

> biological conditions, this does not guarantee, once the biological basis of their oppression has been swept away, that women and children will be freed. On the contrary, the new technology, especially fertility control, may be used against them to reinforce the entrenched system of exploitation. (1972: 10)

This powerful call for woman's effective participation in medicine, biology and in all the stages of the decision making process is one of the most forcefully articulated requirements put forward by feminists in their struggle for social equity and justice. Hilary Rose is similarly critical of the "pervasive conservatism [which] lies at the heart of the debate about the so-called new challenges to ethics posed by the new science and technology of reproduction" (1998: 172). As she goes on to observe, the "problem for feminists is that we want to resist specific oppressive technologies while at the same time working to change nothing less than the values and structures of science. Thus our debates must be located within an understanding of the biologically determinist direction of modern science and medicine which contain within them fixed notions of woman's and man's natures" (1998: 172).

In related vein, Luce Irigaray, whose trajectory includes a long-standing involvement with the Italian feminist communists and the women of the Italian left-wing parties, as well as with issues related with women's bodily experiences, is worried that instead of helping to free women from their subordination to patriarchy, the recent reproductive technologies might further accentuate the traditional view that "the framework for women's existence is exclusively maternal" (1993a: 135). Irigaray further remarks that "there's a real risk that some women, who call themselves freed from their nature such as it was defined by patriarchy, will once again subject themselves body and "soul" to this variant on their fate called artificial procreation" (1993a: 135). Irigaray's doubts find powerful vocalization:

> Test-tube mothers, surrogate mothers, men engendering futuristically (in their intestines): what next? Will all this help us get away from the pressure to have children, our sole sexual "vocation" according to the patriarchs, so as to get to know ourselves, to love and create ourselves in accordance to our bodily differences? (1993a: 135).

Cloning, I believe, would provide a possible answer to Irigaray's distrust of some new reproductive technologies, which she fears might go on reproducing the same male webs of power.[9] Indeed, in "So When Are We to Become Women?" Irigaray observes:

> Today's scientists poring over their test tubes to decide a woman's fertility or fertilization very much resemble theologians speculating about the possibility of a female soul or about the point at which the

> fetus' soul comes into existence. The approach is similar, perhaps worse. And if need be, some of these scientists will be women. (1993a: 134-135)

The prospect of human cloning has effectively forced renewed attention on the sexual politics of reproductive technologies as well as the potential social and family-related scenarios they may bring about.

Motherhood deconstructed

Motherhood, as has often been noted, has served throughout the ages to glorify woman as mother, but at the same time to subordinate her according to the argument that as men cannot biologically fulfil the function of bearing a child, woman has to consecrate most of her time, as well as her ambitions and inclinations, to the higher good of society, its perpetuation and well-being.[10]

In *Patterns of Dissonance*, Rosi Braidotti points out that woman, "whether she likes it or not, only exists in her culture as a potential mother" (1991: 260), a fact which, if it has been the source of one of the only avenues to empowerment women have experienced throughout the ages, has also simultaneously constituted the basis of their enslavement to anatomy. As Julia Kristeva in related vein observes:

> If it is not possible to say of a *woman* what she *is* (without running the risk of abolishing her difference), would it perhaps be different concerning the *mother*, since that is the only function of the 'other sex' to which we can definitely attribute existence? And yet, there too, we are caught in a paradox. (1987: 234)

These difficulties inherent in the contested site that is motherhood and the many theorizations surrounding it are described by Patrice DiQuinzio as precisely a "paradoxical politics of mothering" (1999: xvii), one which would "take up a wide variety of issues related to conception, pregnancy, birth, and child rearing, but it would recognize that it cannot offer a completely coherent and consistent position on these issues" (1999: 248). The advent of the new reproductive technologies we have been alluding to would bring into greater relief many of the paradoxes attendant upon these various conceptions of motherhood.

With human cloning and ectogenesis, as well as the sharing of the reproductive capacity with men, I believe that instead of relinquishing the source of power that motherhood has been perceived in some respects as yielding, as some critics would argue,[11] women would, on the contrary, achieve a greater equality by dint of that very interchange of roles, in particular if and when ectogenesis became the norm.[12] The politics of motherhood, thus, would necessarily undergo drastic changes, as would the dynamics of the nuclear family.

Woman has been for so long inextricably associated with motherhood that to contemplate the idea of woman as non-mother would appear as a scandal, socially unacceptable, impossibly revolutionary and potentially deeply threatening to the patriarchal stronghold.[13] Cloning technology applied to human beings would thus predictably have far-reaching effects in all social and family dynamics. Men who decided to have cloned offspring, and assuming that artificial wombs would be available, could thus choose to have their child completely on their own, as if there were no women in the world. Conversely, a woman could do exactly the same, and much earlier, since she would not have to depend on ectogenesis to bear and give birth to a baby, if she so chose.[14] These can be seen as very powerful motivating factors that might lead a woman to opt for having a cloned child, brought to term inside her own womb or in an artificial one, circumstances that would potentially and gradually lead to a greater parity with men and equality of opportunities for women in the social structure, as I have been arguing.

This relative symmetry in access to reproductive roles could lead, nonetheless, to a predominance of a masculinist political agenda, as already mentioned, perpetuating the *status quo* of men in an androcentric society. As J. Raymond observes, the new reproductive techniques can be seen as a powerful means for men to wrest "not only control of reproduction, but reproduction itself" (1985: 12) from women, a point that is also stressed by Michelle Stanworth, who notes that new reproductive technologies "are the vehicle that will turn men's illusions of reproductive power into a reality" (1987: 16).[15] The implications embedded in these developments as far as women and pregnancy are concerned are thus much more extensive than the consideration of their biological consequences might lead us to suspect. As Michelle Stanworth goes on to note, in tune with my reflections mentioned above, "motherhood as a unified biological process will be effectively deconstructed" (1987: 16).[16]

I believe it is essential, when we stand at the threshold of a new era where different versions of "Brave New Worlds," to borrow Aldous Huxley's resonant words, will necessarily emerge, to anticipate and examine at least the general outlines these societal configurations might take.[17]

Conclusion

From the perspective I have been presenting, human cloning can be seen to constitute a very important and empowering step forward for women, a fundamental strategic move on the way to egalitarian rights with men. Might cloning be in fact one of the stepping stones to enable such egalitarianism to gradually arise? I tend to believe so, as long as it is used with the necessary caution and common sense with respect to the unavoidable ethical and moral issues. As many critics have abundantly stressed, however, women have to play an actively participatory role in the forging and implementation of new technological advances in science in general and in the networks of power. There is a pressing need to reverse Haraway's pessimistic position according

to which there is no place for woman in these networks, "only geometries of difference and contradiction crucial to women's cyborg identities. If we learn how to read these webs of power and social life, we might learn new couplings, new coalitions" (1991: 170). Woman's insertion in these webs of power, her greater agency in the scientific and medical arenas, constitute a fundamental step towards the implementation of a political agenda that will contemplate women's welfare and potential new reproductive scenarios in our cyberspace age.

In "Stabat Mater," Kristeva claims that "motherhood ... today remains, after the Virgin, without a discourse" (1987: 262). With cloning, however, the fantasy of a virgin maternal might come to be fulfilled, providing a revolutionary new vision to the concept of motherhood and potentially enabling new feminine discourses to arise, alongside Kristeva's call for a "*herethics*" (1987: 263). As Toril Moi similarly stresses, with relation to "Stabat Mater," "there is ... an urgent need for a 'post-virginal' discourse on maternity, one which ultimately would provide both women and men with a new ethics" (1986: 161).

Following on from Kristeva's exhortation for the necessity of revising the cult of the Virgin Mary while retaining some of its empowering aspects, I wish to end this essay by suggesting that many threads of that new discourse on motherhood already exist, as I hope has become clear, and will in all likelihood be greatly added to with the inevitable reflections and theorizations that will accompany the advent of human cloning.

At the end of her book *Alone of All Her Sex*, Marina Warner remarks that "as an acknowledged creation of Christian mythology, the Virgin's legend will endure in its splendour and lyricism, but it will be emptied of moral significance, and thus lose its present real powers to heal and to harm" (2000: 339). It seems to me that, contrary to Warner's predictions, the impact of human cloning for women in particular is likely to add a renewed vigour to the iconic figure of the Virgin Mary, turning her into a potent symbol of stimulating and reinvented potentialities for women.

[1]The prospect of the introduction of human cloning has produced heated debate and widespread criticism. Amongst the most salient concerns cloning has elicited can be cited the link between cloning and eugenic thinking, raising fears of elimination of those deemed less valuable as well as the creation and reproduction of certain genotypes, possibilities that could lead to a profusion of designer babies and, given time, to a much more uniform population pool. The power to choose who to clone and what characteristics designer babies should possess is inextricably linked with economic and political privilege, leaving out a large part of the world population and inevitably leading to discrimination and imbalances in terms of skin colour and related ethnic issues. Human cloning also raises numerous ethical and religious questions, which address such notions as the inviolable uniqueness of an individual, family

dynamics and the laws that regulate the family unit, as well as what is perceived by some as the highly transgressive act of daring to create life, a gift exclusive to God. For extended discussion of these issues see for instance Ruth F. Chadwick (1987), Daniel Kevles (1997), Matha C. Nussbaum and Cass R. Sustein (1998), John Harris (1998), Tom L. Beauchamp and LeRoy Walters (1999) and Lisa Yount (2000).

[2]For a full discussion of the complex questions involved in ectogenesis see, for instance, Susan M. Squier's *Babies in Bottles* (1994) and Julien S. Murphy's "Is Pregnancy Necessary? Feminist Concerns About Ectogenesis" (1998).

[3]I find these technophobic arguments too dependent on essentialist notions of woman and nature, treating culture and technology as the inevitable enemies of that implied connection with the natural world, itself unavoidably enmeshed in binary, exclusionary dualisms. As I wish to argue, science and technology can benefit women immensely, if developed and applied according to ethical rules drafted by committees in which both men and women are equally represented.

[4]These changes would only happen gradually. Apocalyptic visions of armies of cloned people being "fabricated" for specific purposes is clearly not a part of Firestone's (1972) project, which considers versions of cloning as enabling women to bypass the seemingly inevitable fate their biological position dictates for them.

[5]This much needed theorization remains, however, beyond the scope of this essay.

[6]From which that baby would subsequently be "decanted," to borrow the pejorative terminology Aldous Huxley used in *Brave New World.*

[7]I am here assimilating clones with cyborgs, since the former are the result of laboratory manipulation of cells.

[8]See for instance her *Reflections on Gender and Science* (Keller, 1984) and "From Secrets of Life to Secrets of Death" (Keller, 1990).

[9]In a private conversation with me, in June 2001, however, Luce Irigaray considered the prospect of cloning as "sad" in terms of social and family life.

[10]Thus implicitly suggesting that in spite of their alleged superiority men are often found defficient in providing a smoothly running environment for their home and children. Dorothy Dinnerstein (1976), Jane Gallop (1982), and Nancy Chodorow (1978) offer a pertinent critique of patriarchal patterns of socialization in the traditional nuclear family. Chodorow in particular forcefully argues the case for a much greater participation of the father in the raising of the children and the running of the household.

[11]Amongst these could be cited Renate Duelli Klein (1985), Gena Corea (1985a and 1985b), Roberta Steinbacher (1985); with Helen Holmes (1998), Rita Arditti (1984) and Arditti *et al.* (1985).

[12]It goes without saying that these potentialities would similarly provide men with the possibility of having their own children without a woman's help, thus putatively originating the development of an imbalance in the relative number of male and female births, on the one hand, as in Anna Wilson's dystopian novel

Hatching Stones and on the other hand the appropriation, or rather, perpetuation of the power of decision over the future shape of society if women are not equally at the centre of the processes of decision-making. This is obviously an extreme scenario, just as the idea that given these tantalizing possibilities women would immediately avail themselves of these opportunities and decide not to become pregnant any more, leaving to the laboratory and the artificial womb the task of bearing their children. This futuristic prospect is many decades away, which is not to say that in the relatively near future many women might not be able to decide, for medical or other reasons, to profit from these new resources, if indeed they become available.

[13]In "Motherhood: The Annihilation of Women," Jeffner Allen rejects motherhood "on the grounds that motherhood is dangerous to women" (1984: 315) and argues the case for a "philosophy of evacuation" (1984: 315), which "proposes women's collective removal of ourselves from all forms of motherhood" (1984: 315). As Allen explains the rationale behind her statement: "Freedom is never achieved by the mere inversion of an oppressive construct, that is, by seeing motherhood in a 'new' light. Freedom is achieved when an oppressive construct, motherhood, is vacated by its members and thereby rendered null and void" (1984: 315).

[14]I am assuming here that probably the technology for cloning a human being may predictably be developed before artificial wombs become ready for use, indispensable for men to have their cloned babies.

[15]This scenario is given fictional illustration in for example Maureen Duffy's *Gor Saga* (1981) and Fay Weldon's *The Cloning of Joanna May* (1989).

[16]In this context, surrogate motherhood is a case in point. In her discussion of surrogacy Lori B. Andrews (1998) considers that the arguments brought to bear on this question are predominantly political and have to do with the fundamental issue of whether the government should have an ascendency over women's bodies and regulate them, as is the case with surrogacy. As Andrews synthesizes her position: "Some feminists have criticized surrogacy as turning participating women, albeit with their consent, into reproductive vessels. I see the danger of the antisurrogacy arguments as potentially turning *all* women into reproductive vessels, without their consent, by providing government oversight for women's decisions and creating a disparate legal category for gestation. Moreover, by breathing life into arguments that feminists have put to rest in other contexts, the current rationales opposing surrogacy could undermine a larger feminist agenda" (1998: 168).

[17]Some fictional accounts which illustrate different versions of the potential scenarios human cloning might give rise to include, amongst others: Mary E. Bradley Lane's *Mizora* (1890), Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915), Gwyneth Jones's *Divine Endurance* (1984), Joanna Russ's *The Female Man* (1975), Naomi Mitchison's *Solution Three* (1975), Pamela Sargent's *Cloned Lives* (1976), Kate Wilhelm's *Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang* (1977), James Tiptree Jr's "Houston, Houston, Can You Read?" (1976), Sally Miller Gearhart's

The Wanderground (1978), Suzy McKee Charnas's *Motherlines* (1978), Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1983), Joan Slonczewski's *A Door Into Ocean* (1986), Sheri Tepper, *The Gate to Women's Country* (1988), Anna Wilson's *Hatching Stones* (1991), Fay Weldon's *The Cloning of Joanna May* (1993) and Lisa Tuttle's "World of Strangers" (1998).

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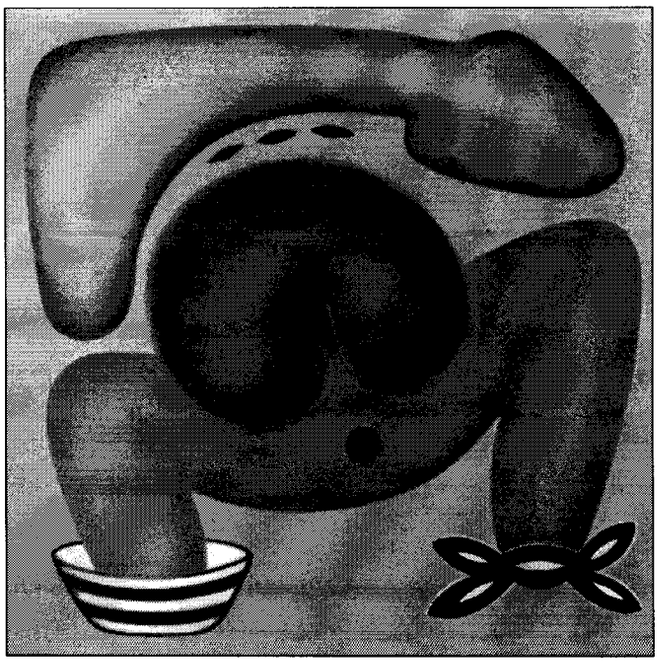
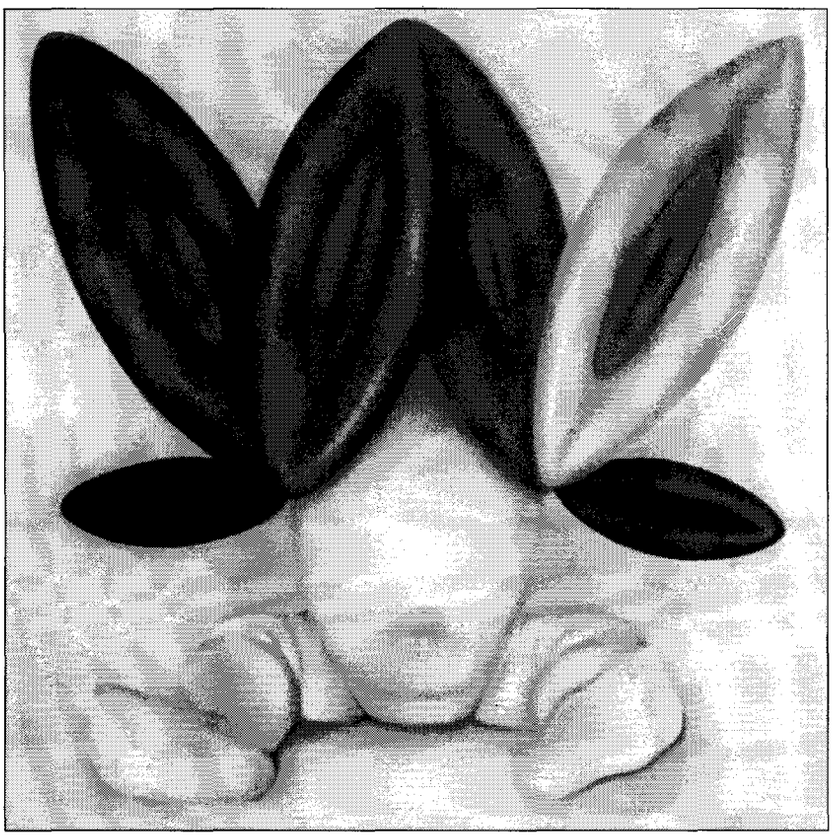
Simone Kennedy, "Little Woman," 1997, oil on linen, 1200 x 1150cm.



Simone Kennedy, "Vessel," 1995, oil on linen, 950 x 950 cm.

Simone Kennedy, "Innocence," 1997,
oil on linen, 1370 x 61 cm.



Simone Kennedy, "Hybrid," 1998,
oil on linen, 91 x 91 cm.

Nané Jordan

and Out

in

and

out

in

and

out

in and out,

and in and out and

in and out and in and out and in

and out

and in.

Touching,

my baby's head at

birth,

she is emerging,

stretching me beyond

always,

beyond always and even wider open than I ever wanted

to stretch,

I am stretching so wide open,

I am bursting with this life.

Liquids pour forth from inside

of me,

down my legs and onto

my feet

the bed

the floor,

liquids with familiar deep

smells

to the midwife,

as blood

amniotic fluid

and even shit

mix

to exacting proportions of

alchemical wisdom,

the pungence of damp earth

and acrid greens.

in

and

out

and

in and out

and in and out and in

and out

and in

and out.

My baby's head emerges,

fingertips touching

I reach around the wet roundness of it,

a ball between my legs,

the round earth between my legs,

how

is this possible?

and out and out and out

and out.

Her body slips out and lies

there,

I lift her to

my chest

my breast

or is it my soul?

in a moment of

forever.

Lisa G. Algazi

Martyred Mothers Never Die

The Legacy of Rousseau's Julie

In his autobiography, *The Life of Henri Brulard* (1973), the French novelist Stendhal tells a story that exemplifies the impact of Rousseau's (1967) preromantic novel, *Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse*, on the reading public of his time. Stendhal's grandfather recalls that, in 1760, the year of the novel's publication, a close friend of his, the Baron des Adrets, did not come down to dinner one evening. His wife sent a servant to look for him, whereupon the normally cold and formal gentleman appeared with tears streaming down his face. His wife, rather alarmed, asked: "What's wrong, my friend?"[1] and he replied simply, "Ah, Madame, Julie is dead!"[2] (1973: 184).

Perhaps no other novel in the history of literature has so affected the attitudes, values, and sensibilities of its generation, not to mention those of generations to come. From its romantic beginnings to its tragic dénouement, *Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* serves as a practical manual for women, telling them how to act, how to think, and even, perhaps most importantly, how to die. Readers took the implicit masochistic values of female self-sacrifice as source of fulfillment or salvation as a model for a mythology of the ideal mother that perpetuates female abnegation. As we will see, it was Julie's death even more than her life that fired the imaginations of eighteenth-century readers and subsequently affected the lives of countless generations of women who would become mothers in the Western world.

In her essay entitled "Stabat Mater," French psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva speaks of "the self-sacrifice involved in becoming anonymous in order to pass on the social norm" (1986: 183). Kristeva calls such self-effacement a "père-version," a form of officially sanctioned masochism for which women are offered the reward of sainthood in exchange for total powerlessness in the symbolic world of patriarchy. As Kristeva writes:

> Feminine perversion ... is ... legalized ... through the agency of masochism.... Feminine perversion *[père-version]* is coiled up in the desire for law as desire for reproduction and continuity, it promotes feminine masochism to the rank of structure stabilizer...; by assuring the mother that she may thus enter into an order that is above that of human will it give her her reward of pleasure. Such coded perversion, such close combat between maternal masochism and the law have been utilized by totalitarian powers of all times to bring women to their side (1986: 183).

Maternal self-sacrifice, then, can be seen as a device used by totalitarian systems such as patriarchy to rob women of power in the law of the symbolic world by codifying the ways in which they may express their desire for continuity. The continuous cycle of maternal altruism as passed along from mother to dutiful daughter becomes the framework for female reproduction; as long as mothers continue to find it necessary to raise their children to conform to this norm, their daughters will believe in the inherent worth of selflessness as a means of masochistic pleasure. While, as Kristeva argues, such a mythology of motherhood loses much of its appeal in a society no longer dominated by Christian ideals of sacrifice and ultimate reward, I would argue that this ideology, originating in the martyred maternal image of Julie, remains with us today, pervading our popular culture with representations of self-sacrificing maternal masochism.

In the case of Julie, the cycle of maternal martyrdom begins with the death of Julie's own mother, Madame d'Etange. A virtual nonentity in the plot until the circumstances leading to her demise, Madame d'Etange represents the older generation of mothers who, completely submissive to their husbands, can only pray that their husbands will spare their children the excesses of paternal authority. The Baron d'Etange, upon the discovery of Julie's liaison with her tutor Saint-Preux, commits her first and only act of conjugal defiance by hiding her discovery from her husband in order to protect her daughter. In spite of this proof of maternal tenderness, Julie and her mother seem distant until the moment when the mother actively assumes her role as the daughter's confidante and protector. Unfortunately, taking her child's side against her husband seems to consume all of Madame d'Etange's limited strength; too weak to help her daughter any further, she can only wish for the key to the couple's happiness. She is quite powerless, however, to deliver such a key, telling Julie in a moment of mental rebellion: "If it were only up to me...!"[3] (Rousseau, 1967: 230) Exhausted by even this minimal effort to resist her husband's domination, she dies, giving birth through her death to a new Julie who will follow the maternal example and submit to the law of the Father—the Baron d'Etange—in order to become a mother herself. The cycle of maternal sacrifice repeats itself, with a change of emphasis, however, that illustrates the Rousseauistic ideal of the mother. Whereas Madame d'Etange represents the older generation, submis-

sive and self-effacing before the father, Julie creates her own path of virtue and duty: at once submissive and dominant, respectful of her husband and devoted to her children, she redefines conjugal and maternal duties with emphasis on the latter. While for Madame d'Etange the husband's will takes precedence over the welfare of her child, Julie will allow nothing to interfere with her maternal role; in contrast to Madame d'Etange who lost her life by placing herself between her husband and daughter, Julie will sacrifice herself to save her child, not from the fury of the father, but from the dangers of nature: Julie meets her death through her attempts to save her son from drowning.

Retrospectively then, Julie's relationship with her mother becomes meaningful only in the sense that Madame d'Etanges ultimately places her daughter's welfare above her own. This pattern of maternal sacrifice, set by Madame d'Etange and followed by Julie, reinforces the symbolic order by demonstrating the precedence of the child's survival over that of the mother. Madame d'Etange's attempt to remain faithful to the symbolic order of the father failed when the revelation of her daughter's danger awakened her maternal protectiveness. Her betrayal of the law of the father marks a break in the familial order and a return, for mother and daughter, to a symbiotic intimacy for which the daughter has longed since the beginning of the novel, but which, since Madame d'Etange gives her life for it, comes too late.

Fittingly, Madame d'Etange is punished for her temporary betrayal of the symbolic order: ironically, her death marks her daughter's return to the very laws that killed her mother. As Julie writes after her mother's death: "worthy wife, incomparable mother, now you live in the place of glory and bliss..."[4] (Rousseau, 1967: 231). In order to experience the same "glory and bliss" of a heavenly reward, Julie must conform to the patriarchal code of maternal abnegation that killed her mother. In order to live by her dead mother's value system, Julie must put aside Saint-Preux, her lover and male/maternal substitute, and re-enter the patriarchal order so that she may in turn become a "worthy wife, incomparable mother" like Madame d'Etange. Interestingly, Julie will have only sons; Rousseau thereby deprives her of the very mother-daughter bond that was so instrumental in Julie's submission to marriage. In her self-sacrifice for her male children, even—or especially—unto death, Julie earns the approval and admiration of all who know her; her sons will be strengthened by the memory of their mother who abandoned all thoughts of herself in order to assure their happiness, indeed their salvation.

As Julie reminisces on her deathbed, she tells Claire that her mother's death served a vital function by effectively ending her brief attempt at selfhood in her affair with Saint-Preux. Had her mother lived, Julie speculates, Julie might have been tempted to continue her liaison with Saint-Preux, a liaison that, according to her, could only have ended in disaster. Her voluntary return to "reason," to the sacrificial economy of Rousseauistic maternity, is a direct consequence of her mother's death, serving as a model for Julie's own sacrificial death for the sake of her son. Both of these mothers, then, gave their lives to

save their children, one from mortal sin, the other from drowning. In this way the cycle of maternal sacrifice continues and is sanctified by the idea of a higher purpose. Julie's guilt at having caused her mother's death, possibly an echo of Rousseau's own guilt about his own mother's death at his birth[5], is assuaged by this revolutionary concept of quasi-mythical dimensions: that of the self-sacrificing mother. The incident itself, the actual act of sacrifice, becomes unimportant: Julie's husband Wolmar even trivializes it in his letter to Saint-Preux, saying, "It is not of her illness, but of her that I wish to speak to you. Other mothers can throw themselves in after their children"[6] (Rousseau, 1967: 536). For Rousseau, as for Wolmar, the reflexive risking of one's life for one's offspring is a given, something any mother would do, according to the idea of natural maternal instinct advanced by Rousseau and accepted as truth by many of his readers, both male and female.

Julie also sees her early death as a means of escape from an uncertain future: as a woman who lives solely for her sons, their eventual separation from her and entry into the symbolic world would have been painful for her. As she so wisely notes, "Maternal tenderness grows continually, filial tenderness shrinks, as children live further from their mother.... They would have lived in the world; they might have neglected me"[7] (Rousseau, 1967: 553). By dying at the height of her role as a mother, she avoids the disappointments and sacrifices that would await her as her sons grew older. This eventual separation from her children is not the only thing Julie is trying to escape, however. In her final letter to Saint-Preux, she confesses that her love for him is far from dead: "One more day perhaps, and I would have been guilty! By taking away my life, Heaven ... is protecting my honor"[8] (565). The sacrifice of Julie's life not only saves her son, it also expiates her original sin of loving Saint-Preux, the sin which caused her own mother's death. Her maternal rescue of her son drowning in the lake is a baptism, through which Julie not only preserves his life, but also assures the salvation of her soul and that of Saint-Preux. Her death therefore serves a double purpose, giving Julie the right to sainthood two times over, once for her maternal altruism and then again for her dedication to virtue. It is worth pointing out, once again, the deeply imbedded fault lines along which Julie's sacrifice runs: her sense of guilt at having been the cause of her mother's death has created a wish to expiate that guilt by giving up first her selfhood and then her life in defense of the patriarchal system as symbolized by her father and, later, her son. Her unquestioning acceptance of maternal masochism as a means of social stability and a holy way of life leads to her saintly death and the resulting cult of the maternal in France and throughout the Western world.

Far from being a mere heroine in an obscure novel, Julie became an overnight sensation, a powerful symbol of the new maternity described by Rousseau in his essay on education, *Emile* (1964). Julie's ultimate immolation on the altar of maternal love served as a catalyst for social reform whose effects can be observed throughout the two centuries that separate us from the original publication of *La Nouvelle Héloïse.* Beginning with Rousseau's contemporaries,

both male and female, the novelist was praised as the first man to truly understand women. To illustrate the novel's devastating impact on readers of the time, I would like to quote at length from a letter sent to Madame de Verdelin by Madame de Polignac in 1760. Madame de Polignac wrote:

> The first five volumes drew tears from my eyes, but the sixth![9] Oh my dear, I dare not describe to you the effect it had upon me; no, I was beyond tears, an acute feeling of sadness took possession of me and wrung my heart. Julie on her death-bed was no longer like some unknown being: I felt I was her sister, her friend, her Claire[10]: my emotion rose to such a pitch that had I not put down the book I would have felt as faint as those who surrounded this virtuous woman during the last moments of her life.... You know that as long as I thought of the *citizen*[11] as merely a philosopher and a learned man, it never occurred to me to cultivate his acquaintance; but Julie's lover, the man who loved her as she deserved to be loved, oh! that is quite another matter; my first impulse was to order a carriage, ... to see him at all costs, to tell him how his tender emotion seemed to me to put him far above other men, to ask him to let me see Julie's portrait, to let me kiss it and kneel before the image of this divine woman, who, even as she ceased to be virtuous, was ever a model of all the virtues.... [12] (Guéhenno, 1952: 69)

Struck by the heroic and virtuous nature of Julie's death, Madame de Polignac was far from an isolated case; we have hundreds of examples of such testimony to the influence of Julie on eighteenth-century readers. Even Madame de Staël, whose career as an author depended to some extent on her liberation from maternal duties, claimed that maternal love was revived by Rousseau: "... he made known to mothers this duty and this pleasure; he inspired in them the desire to allow no one to rob them of the first caresses of their children...."[13] By inspiring in mothers the desire to raise their children themselves, Rousseau introduced the concept of redemption through maternal altruism; or, as Madame de Staël puts it, "all is not yet lost for the unfortunate mother whose errors or whose fate have ruined her life!"[14] (1979: 56)

While, in the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, Rousseau bestowed a new status on mothers by elevating the function of motherhood to sacred heights, he also created a new social arrangement by which mothers turn out little men who will go on to be all-powerful fathers, and little women who will perpetuate the masochistic cycle of maternal selflessness. These ideas were immediately taken up by various moralists wishing to restrain women in their role as mother, not the least of whom was Napoleon, who based parts of his Civil Code dealing with women on the teachings of Rousseau. In the nineteenth century, according to Elisabeth Badinter's study entitled *Mother Love, Myth and Reality* (1980), Jules Michelet, among others, considered it perfectly natural for a woman to sacrifice herself

for her child. As Badinter writes, "Faced with a choice between the mother and the child, the [nineteenth] century chose to save the child and immolate the mother. In this sacrifice of self, woman found her reason for being and her pleasure. The woman was indeed a masochist" (1980: 235). Horrible invectives were thrown at "bad" mothers throughout the nineteenth century, and exemplary "bad" mothers found a prominent place in literature, with such tales as Balzac's *La Femme de trente ans* and Constant's *Adolphe,* two stories of selfish and inadequate mothers and the suffering brought upon them by their neglect of supposedly "instinctive" maternal duties.[15]

However, if, as Rousseau claimed, maternal instinct was a product of nature, then why did one moralist after another find it necessary to endlessly expound upon the self-denial required of the "good" mother, right up through the mid-twentieth century?[16] Dr. Benjamin Spock, the mothering guru of my parents' generation, seems to believe that by becoming a mother, a woman finds in herself a maternal 'instinct,' a product of her female nature, that will tell her how to care for her infant; but where does that leave women who fail to find in themselves this well of natural selflessness that, according to our popular culture, all "good" mothers automatically possess? Badinter argues that maternal instinct is a result, not of instinct, but of culture (1980: 4). Taking that argument one step further into the realm of psychoanalytic theory, I would add that the willingness to give one's life for one's offspring is learned by the little girl from her identification with her mother, who was raised by her own mother to believe in the mythology of maternal masochism as a path to righteousness. This mythology is therefore self-perpetuating as well as subtle; learned by example rather than by teaching, it can only be interrupted by a radical change in the behavior of mothers themselves.

Such change does not come easily, however. Adrienne Rich tells of her fears of being "a monster of selfishness and intolerance" toward her demanding children, based on the "unexamined assumption ... that maternal love is, and should be, quite literally selfless ..." (1986: 21-22). Rich was obviously not listening when Julie's minister, choked with emotion, said to his languishing parishioner: "Madame, you are dying as a martyr to maternal love ... may we all live and die like you! We will be assured of the happiness of the other life"[17] (Rousseau, 1967: 546). The reward for maternal sacrifice, then, seems to be eternal life in heaven; but if maternal instinct is merely a product of nature, why is there a need for any reward, either here or hereafter? The language of sacrifice and reward in Rousseau, later borrowed by his admirers, disproves Rousseau's own thesis of a natural maternal instinct and shows how the cult of motherhood, with Julie as its chief Martyred Saint, served as a tool in the hands of the powerful to deny social power, the power of the law, to women who attempt to follow in the footsteps of their mothers.

Even now, we are surrounded by evidence of the influence of Julie's death on popular culture. In the classic film *Gone With the Wind,* Melanie Wilkes portrays the epitome of the self-sacrificing mother; when she becomes preg-

nant against the doctor's advice, she tells Rhett Butler, with a saintly smile, "Children are life renewing itself, Cap'n Butler, and when life does that, danger seems very unimportant." The selfless mother image also explains the popularity of a 1987 novel by Betty Mahmoody entitled *Not Without my Daughter*, and the subsequent movie, starring Sally Field as the stereotypical hysterical mother who risks her life to save her daughter from her cruel and tyrannical husband. I could cite countless other instances of idealized maternal martyrdom in Hollywood, that Mecca of popular culture; from old classics like *Pocketful of Miracles* and *Stella Dallas* to more recent dramas such as *Steel Magnolias,* the purveyors of cultural ideology continue to make a profit from portrayals of noble, altruistic mothers. Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, recently revived as a popular musical, first in France and then in Britain, tells a tale of the selfless devotion of a saintly mother, Fantine, who sacrifices her beautiful hair, her health, her virtue, and eventually her life in order to ensure the survival of her beloved daughter. In the original French score, Fantine sings: "You have to feel you'll survive / in a child you've brought to life / and in her spring of innocence / you drown your despair / so as not to bring an end / to this life without hope."[18] (*Les Misérables*). This sentiment is reminiscent of Mme de Staël's praise of Rousseau for allowing mothers to live vicariously through their children.

Julie's continued importance is reflected in the most unlikely sources, from Broadway musicals to TV sitcoms; the controversy about Murphy Brown's single motherhood in the 1990s, for example, evolved from Rousseau's ideology of the nuclear family, as did the maternal conflicts in most of our cultural productions to this day. In many ways a Christ-like figure, Julie died to save others and was resurrected in the minds of thousands of readers as the embodiment of a philosophy of femininity called Motherhood.

In her final hours, Julie said to her loved ones:

> No, my friends, no, my children, I am not leaving you, I will stay with you; by leaving you all united, my spirit and my heart will remain with you. You will see me constantly among you; you will feel yourselves constantly surrounded by me ..."[19] (Rousseau, 1967: 553).

By dying a saintly death, "a martyr to maternal love," Julie remains with us even today. In the words of her loving cousin Claire: "May her spirit move through us, may her heart join all of ours; let us live always in her sight"[20] (Rousseau, 1967: 567). Amen.

[1]"Qu'avez-vous donc, mon ami?" (Note: original French quotes will appear in the endnotes. All translations are my own.)
[2]"Ah, Madame, Julie est morte !"
[3]"S'il ne dépendait que de moi !"
[4]"Digne épouse, mère incomparable, tu vis maintenant au séjour de la gloire et

de la félicité...."

[5]See the opening pages of Rousseau's autobiography, *Les Confessions*: "Ten months later, I was born, infirm and sickly, I cost my mother her life...." (1959: 35).

[6]"Ce n'est point de sa maladie, c'est d'elle que je veux vous parler. D'autres mères peuvent se jeter après leur enfant."

[7]"L'affection maternelle augmente sans cesse, la tendresse filiale diminue, à mesure que les enfants vivent plus loin de leur mère.... Ils auraient vécu dans le monde; ils m'auraient pu négliger."

[8]"Un jour de plus peut-être, et j'étais coupable!... En me l'ôtant [la vie], le ciel ... met mon honneur à couvert."

[9]The sixth volume recounts Julie's death.

[10]This is a reference to Julie's cousin and closest confidante, Claire.

[11]The reference is to Rousseau himself.

[12]"Les premiers volumes m'ont arraché des pleurs, mais le sixième, ô ma belle! Je n'ose vous dire l'effet qu'il m'a fait: non, ce n'est plus le temps des larmes, c'est une douleur vive qui s'est emparée de moi, mon coeur s'est serré. Cette Julie mourante n'a plus été pour moi un être inconnu: je me suis crue sa soeur, son amie, sa Claire; mon saisissement s'est démonté au point que, si je n'eusse quitté le livre, je me serais trouvée aussi mal que tous ceux qui entouraient cette vertueuse femme dans ses derniers moments.... Vous savez que tant que le *citoyen* ne m'a paru qu'un philosophe et un homme d'esprit, il ne m'est pas venu en pensée de chercher à le connaître; mais l'amant de Julie, qui l'a aimée comme elle méritait de l'être, oh! ce n'est plus la même chose; et, dans mon premier mouvement, j'ai été au moment de faire mettre des chevaux ... de le voir à quelque prix que ce fût, lui dire combien il me paraissait par sa tendresse au-dessus des autres hommes, obtenir de lui de voir le portrait de Julie, le baiser, me mettre à genoux devant l'image de cette femme divine, qui, en cessant même d'être vertueuse, a toujours été un modèle de toutes les vertus...."

[13]"... Il fît connaître aux mères ce devoir et ce bonheur; il leur inspira le désir de ne céder à personne les premières caresses de leurs enfans...."

[14]"Tout n'est pas encore perdu pour la mère malheureuse dont les fautes ou la destinée ont empoisonné la vie!"

[15]Ironically, the "bad" mother of Constant's *Adolphe*—the domineering Elénore who abandons her children for the sake of her love—is modeled upon the same Madame de Staël whom we heard earlier praising Rousseau's concept of self-sacrificing motherhood.

[16]See Selma Fraiberg, *Every Child's Birthright: In Defense of Mothering* (1977), or *Dr. Spock's Baby and Child Care* (1992).

[17]"Madame, vous mourez martyre de l'amour maternel ... puissions-nous tous tant que nous sommes vivre et mourir comme vous! Nous serons bien sûrs du bonheur de l'autre vie."

[18]"Il faut qu'on se sente survivre / dans un enfant qu'on a fait vivre / et qu'en sa source d'innocnece / on noie notre désespérance / pour ne pas mettre fin / à cette

vie sans lendemain."

[19]"Non, mes amis, non, mes enfants, je ne vous quitte pas pour ainsi dire, je reste avec vous; en vous laissant tous unis, mon esprit, mon coeur, vous demeurent. Vous me verrez sans cesse entre vous; vous vous sentirez sans cesse environnés de moi ...."

[20]"Que son esprit nous anime, que son coeur joigne tous les nôtres; vivons toujours sous ses yeux."

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Carol Duncan

"Mammy" in the Erotic Imaginary of Anaïs Nin

Mammy emerged as one of the most pervasive images of black womanhood from slavery and its aftermath in the United States. With her large buttocks and breasts, stout body, jet black skin, jovial nature (to white people—to black people, black men, in particular, she was definitely not "nice"), ever-present smile and kerchief on her head, mammy was the epitome of servility and sexual undesirability according to dominant Euro-American standards of beauty which value thinness and "whiteness."

Mammy served a double purpose in the sexual and racial iconography of slavery and particularly in the post-slavery United States. On the one hand, she represented unquestioning loyalty to white supremacist structures of power in the form of the domestic service she performed in the plantation great house for the master and mistress and their children. On the other hand, as feminist scholar Barbara Christian noted in the documentary *Ethnic Notions*, the mammy stereotype effectively desexualized black women.

Maria St. John, in the essay "Cinematic and Fantasmatic Contours of Mammy: A Psychoanalytic Exploration of Race, Fantasy, and Cultural Exploration," presents a psychoanalytic analysis of mammy as a source of fantasy "in the service of the construction of whiteness" (1991: 1). Her analysis focuses on the way in which the mammy stereotype, in general, and the character Mammny from *Gone With the Wind,* both the cinematic and literary texts, serves to reinforce the primary fantasy of race in the West which is essentialized "racial opposition" (1991: 1) between "blacks" and "whites." In fantasies of mammy, this idea is expressed primarily in relations between black women and white women, especially, white women as "white mistresses" (1991: 5).

Mammy's desexualized persona typified by her visualization as the foil of the "real" woman constructed in the nineteenth century "cult of true woman-

hood," masked the sexual exploitation many black women suffered within the context of performing domestic service. The mammy thus functioned as a figure that legitimized enslaved servitude in the performance of domestic work while at the same time she nullified any consideration of black women as sexual beings and potential partners of white men within white households. Importantly, she also served to silence any consideration of black women as sexual victims. Mammy's foil was the overtly sexualized Jezebel stereotype discussed as the "bad black girl" by K. Sue Jewell (1993). The "bad black girl" was a light-skinned, black woman whose "beauty" approximated that of the Euro-American norm and whose hypersexuality effectively erased the spectre of desire by (white) men for black women.

While Mammy was primarily represented as quintessentially asexual there are images of black women as a sexualized domestic workers who are potentially competitors with white women for the attentions of white men which appear in erotic texts such as two short stories written by Anaïs Nin (1903-1977) entitled "Saffron," from *The Delta of Venus* (1977) and "Artists and Models" from *Little Birds* (1979). I chose to focus on Nin's erotic writings because of their dual potential of articulating transgressive desires and the potential for subversion of the *status quo*. Indeed, Nin, is often popularly positioned as a writer who articulated women's sexuality and desires in a distinctly female voice. Of course, the question that comes to mind here as many feminist scholars such as bell hooks (1992) and Audre Lorde (1984) have raised is: which women's voice and whose sexuality? In other words, while there is the promise of transformation and transgression of images and stereotypes, erotica can often serve as a space in which these very same images are reinforced especially if the erotica that is produced is given the wide cultural sanction of "speaking for" that Nin's has enjoyed.

Kobena Mercer's (1994) analysis of photographer Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs of black men, attests to this duality which ultimately reinforces stereotypic imagery through making the erotic subject a "fetish." In the case of Mapplethorpe's photographs of black men, racial stereotypes of black men as hypersexual were reinforced through the unrelenting focus on their penises in the photographs.

Nin's two stories reinforce images of black women as hypersexual, silent bodies mute save for an indefinable sexual something made tangible by Nin as their "scent." The stories, in effect, present a merger of the mammy and Jezebel stereotypes of black women which are themselves racialized images of the madonna/whore imagery which splits motherhood from sexuality. In the following essay, I explore Nin's use of these dual images in relationships between black and white women and black women and white men. I suggest that in Nin's stories, black women appear as conduits for the expression of white men's and women's sexualities. They function as agents of sexual change while they themselves remain forever silent and mute save for their bodies represented by their essential "scent."

Scent of a (Black) woman

Anaïs Nin (1903-1977) was a member of a group of expatriate writers and artists including American writer Henry Miller who lived in Paris during the 1930s. She was born in France to a Danish-Cuban mother and a Catalan father. She grew up as a child, adolescent and young adult between France, Cuba and New York City. She was shaped by three languages—Spanish, French and English—and Cuban, urban Parisian and New York cultures although she published in English. Perhaps it is this "hybridity," culturally and linguistically, that characterizes much of Nin's works. I chose to focus on Nin because her writings and indeed her very image have become prominent in what can be called the canon of contemporary popular western erotica. Hollywood films such as *Nine and a Half Weeks*, *Wild Orchid,* and *Wide Sargasso Sea,* singer Madonna's controversial 1992 book, *Sex*, and popular cable TV show *The Red Shoe Diaries* point to the impact of Nin's quest to create a woman's erotic voice in the visual terrain of contemporary popular cultural representations of women's sexuality. Nin's two collections of erotica, *Delta of Venus* and *Little Birds* are perhaps, her most well-known publications. Written on commission during the 1940s for a private collector, they became the basis of Nin's fame and wealth in the latter years of her life in the 1970s.

Ironically, in terms of the topic of this paper, Anaïs Nin's memory is evoked most widely in the popular cultural imagination through the perfume, by the cosmetics firm Cacharel, *Anaïs, Anaïs*, which bears her name . The irony of this naming lies in the fact that it is through scent that Nin evokes an essential black female sexual presence in two erotic stories, "Saffron" and "Artists and Models." The "scent of a woman" for Nin is representative of female sexuality. In these two stories, Nin suggests that the essential sexual scent of a woman is fundamentally "black." Here she reinforces stereotypic representations of blackness which have their roots in constructions of racial difference on the basis of claims that black people smelled fundamentally "different" (presumably more "animalistic") than white people.

For example, in the trade card "Not Particular" which dates from the turn of the last century,[1] this stereotype of blackness tied to scent and literally "funky" sexuality is graphically demonstrated. Indeed, it is the crux of the rhyme which accompanies the caricatured images of a white gentleman (indicated by his dress in a suit) who is kissing a mammy wearing headtie, apron, and bare feet. The accompanying rhyme reads: "I know you're not particular to a fault,/ Though I'm sure you'll never be sued for assault,/You're so fond of women that even a wench/Attracts your gross fancy despite her strong stench."

While representations of this scent often focussed on the smell of black people as a sign of the inhumanity and so-called inherent bestiality and therefore undesirability of black people, Nin appropriates the image to suggest that the scent of black women is desirable and is the essential scent of "sex" itself. Scent here functions as a marker of race and an aspect of the racialized and sexed body which can potentially announce itself before visual imagery. Scent


NOT PARTICULAR.
I know you're not particular to a fault,
You're so fond of women that even a wench
Attracts your gross fancy despite her strong stench
31

unmasks that which "passing," both racial and cultural seeks to hide.

In "Saffron" and "Artists and Models," from the *Delta of Venus* (1977) and *Little Birds* (1979) erotica collections, respectively, black women who are employed as household workers in the homes of white families feature prominently in the erotic imagination and lives of the white male and female protagonists. It is through absorbing the smell of black women signified as saffron as a sign of black New Orleans women's work in food preparation in "Saffron" and the odour of a black Martiniquian woman's genitals in "Artists and Models" that the erotic potential of a white female and white male, respectively, is released.

In both stories, we are presented with black women as representatives of the archetype of the dark mother/dark harlot, one version of the madonna/whore image of womanhood and motherhood. The stereotype of Mammy as a nurturing, asexual mother, masks the fear of mammy as Jezebel with uncontrollable sexual desires. In Nin's stories, both aspects of black women as madonna and whore, Mammy and Jezebel, are underscored through her characterizations of the anonymous black women servants with voracious sexual appetities who are identified primarily by their "voluminous skirts" and headties, the markers of the mammy stereotype. The stories serve to reinforce the wider binary of upper class white women as madonna and mother and all black women, even those who are madonna-mammies as whore when the close-up, intimate gaze of the writer, in this case, Nin is trained at mammy. While mammy is released from the stereotypic image of the asexual, docile, loyal, servant she is trapped immediately into the image of the hypersexual, silent, and unnamed bad-black-girl save for her "voluminous skirts" and headtie.

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"Saffron," is the story of Fay and Albert a couple in New Orleans whose marriage is unconsummated until Fay takes on the characteristics of a black woman through absorbing the smell of saffron while performing a task related to domestic work — buying an essential ingredient for a culinary dish. Albert, her much older husband, does not "consummate" his marriage with Fay through sexual intercourse. Fay discovers to her dismay that Albert instead engages in sexual relations with a black woman who is a domestic servant in the household:

> She [Fay] decided to leave her room and walk until she could become calm again. Her entire body was throbbing. She walked down the wide staircase and out into the garden. *The perfume of the flowers almost stunned her.* The branches fell languidly over her and the mossy paths made her footsteps absolutely silent. She had the feeling that she was dreaming. She walked aimlessly for a long while. And then a sound startled her. It was a moan, a rhythmic moan like a woman's complaining. The light from the moon fell there between the branches and

> exposed a colored woman lying naked on the moss and Albert over her. Her moans were moans of pleasure. *Albert was crouching like a wild animal and pounding against her.* He, too, was uttering confused cries; and Fay saw them convulsed under her very eyes by the violent joys. (Nin, 1977: 133) [my emphasis]

Fay is both shocked and pained by her discovery which is precipitated by scent—first that of the flowers which foreshadows her discovery of Albert and "a colored woman." Her discovery also raises questions for her about her "femininity" and identity as a woman:

> Neither one saw Fay. She did not cry out. The pain at first paralyzed her. Then she ran back to the house filled with all of the humility of her youth, of her inexperience; she was tortured with doubts of herself. Was it her fault? What had she lacked, what had she failed to do to please Albert? Why had he had to leave her and go to the colored woman? The savage scene haunted her. She blamed herself for falling under the enchantment of his caresses and perhaps not acting as he wanted her to. *She felt condemned by her own femininity.* (Nin, 1977: 133) [my emphasis]

The femininity in question, though named in personal and intimate terms as Fay's "own" is the construct of the passive "good" and "pure" woman as promoted by the nineteenth century cult of true womanhood. Following the initial discovery, Fay begins to notice Albert's sexual relationships with the black women in the household:

> And almost every day Fay saw shadows in the garden, shadows embracing. She was afraid to move from her room. The house was completely carpeted and noiseless, and as she walked up the stairs once she caught sight of Albert climbing behind one of the colored girls and running his hand under her *voluminous skirt.* (Nin, 1977: 135) [my emphasis]

While the time period of this story is not specifically mentioned, its physical setting of New Orleans, a big house with a fragrant garden where the white family lives and separate "colored girls' rooms" temporalizes this story as the antebellum US South or the decades following the Civil War. Mammy's time, in other words. While the black women — the "colored girls" — in the story, are not referred to as mammy, Nin's reference to one of the unnamed women's attire, her "voluminous skirts" (Nin, 1977: 135) makes the connection to mammy's visual representation.

This scenario remains the *status quo* of sexual relations in the house until Fay goes to buy saffron for a rice dish which she and Albert are preparing for

"Spanish friends." Nin is careful to note that Fay "seldom shopped" (Nin, 1977: 135) establishing her role as the mistress of the household. Fay is transformed in the performance of this unaccustomed domestic task:

> When the little packages of saffron were handed to her, she tucked them in her bag, which she carried against her breast, under her arm. *The smell was powerful, it seeped into her clothes, her hands, her very body.* (Nin, 1977: 135) [my emphasis]

Following Fay's absorption of the saffron scent, Albert upon smelling Fay, engages in sexual intercourse with her for the first time in their relationship. He exclaims "happily" afterwards, "You smell like a colored woman" (Nin, 1977: 136). Nin notes that "the spell was broken" (Nin, 1977: 136). Fay is transformed into a black woman through the scent of saffron, a spice used in the preparation of meals, a task from which she is largely divorced in the organization of labour in the household.

***

In another erotic short story by Nin, "Artists and Models," a Martiniquian woman, a household servant, is vividly described by the male protagonist Millard as his "first sexual impression" (1979: 62). As in "Saffron," the woman is once again unnamed and is present only through her physical characteristics of "light skin," "head kerchief" and the ubiquitous "voluminous skirts" (Nin, 1979: 62). This image of a black woman as a household servant merges the physical characteristics of the mammy with that of the bad-black-girl in producing a sexualized black woman domestic worker. The bad-black-girl's light skin as a result of her mixed race (European and African) heritage is merged with the "head kerchief" and "voluminous skirts" of the mammy to produce a sexualized image.

Like the story "Saffron," smell plays a powerful role as a sexual stimulant in Millard's story in "Artists and Models." Noteworthy also is the association with animality in both instances. In the first story, this was indicated through the description of Albert's sexual encounter with the black woman described by Fay in animalistic terms: "Albert was crouching like a wild animal and pounding against her" (Nin, 1977: 133). In "Artists and Models," the woman at the centre of the group sexual encounter is transformed into an animal, a female dog, she figuratively became a "bitch," after smoking marijuana and by extension through Millard's association of an earlier memory of the black female house servant, she becomes a black woman. Millard recounts how this sexual scenario especially a friend "smelling [her] exactly as a dog would do" (Nin, 1979: 61) reminded him of his first "sexual impression" (Nin, 1979: 62) which was stimulated by the Martiniquian servant:

> The night before, he had smoked marijuana with friends. He said, "Did you know that very often it gives people the feeling that they are

> transformed into animals? Last night there was a woman who was completely taken by this transformation. She fell on her hands and knees and walked around like a dog. We took her clothes off. She wanted to give milk. She wanted us to act like puppies, sprawl on the floor and suckle at her breasts. She kept on her hands and knees and offered her breasts to all of us. She wanted us to walk like dogs — after her. She insisted on our taking her in this position, from behind, and I did, but then I was terribly tempted to bite her as I crouched over her. I bit into her shoulder harder than I have ever bitten anyone. The woman did not get frightened. I did. It sobered me. I stood up and then I saw that a friend of mine was following her on his hands and knees, not caressing her or taking her, but merely smelling exactly as a dog would do, and this reminded me so much of my first sexual impression that it gave me a painful hard-on.
>
> As children we had a big servant girl in the country who came from Martinique. She wore voluminous skirts and a colored kerchief on her head. She was a rather pale mulatto, very beautiful. She would make us play hide-and-seek. When it was my turn to hide she would hide me under her skirt, sitting down. And there I was, half-suffocated, hiding between her legs. I remember the sexual odor that came from her and that stirred me even as a boy. Once I tried to touch her, but she slapped my hand. (Nin, 1979: 61-62)

While she is the "big servant girl" who was capable of slapping away his boy's hand, I could not help but wonder if she would have been able to rebuff him later on in terms of body-size as well as domestic household power relations. This image presents a motherly image which is frankly sexual in the relations between mother and child hinting at future sexual relations between not only white men and black women but white men and white women as well. In a sense, the two stories can be linked through positioning Albert in "Saffron," as the boy grown into manhood who completes the act of reaching under the "voluminous skirts" of mammy in his trysts with the black female domestic servants and ultimately with his wife through her scent/sensual transformation of saffron.

Conclusion

These two stories by Anaïs Nin reinforce the image of black women as sexualized others, distinct from the white people, especially white women, with whom they interact in their working roles as domestic servants. Yet, these black women are deeply implicated as sexual catalysts for the emergence of the white male and female characters' own sexuality. This observation raises several important questions in relation to the autobiographical imperative of much of Nin's writing. Autobiography though most explicit in the *Diaries*, for which

Nin is famous, which began as a letter to her absent father in 1914 as an eleven-year-old on her first trans-Atlantic voyage from France to live in New York City, also influenced her writing in other genres.

If Nin's writings are autobiographical, how, then, are we to read these stories in light of Nin's relationship with her own loyal, household servant, a black Caribbean woman named Millicent? How also are we to read them if we take into consideration that Nin often wrote aspects of her own life and those of others around her into her narratives? Are these black women from the Caribbean and from Louisiana, for instance, stand-ins for black women who worked in domestic service for the upper class of which Nin's mother's family was a part in late nineteenth and early 20th century Cuba? It is not possible within the scope of this essay to address these questions. I raise them, here however, as points of reflection for further analysis on the construction of racialized and sexualized identities both through an author's self-conscious narration of their own lives (Nin's *Diaries*) as well as their construction of other narratives in which they and others are reflected (the erotica).

Nin's erotic writings are perhaps her most-well known publications. The images that she produced in her best-selling collections of erotica, published in the latter years of her life, have potentially far-reaching implications for their impact on sexual and gender-based stereotyping given the popularity of her work. The importance, for me of Nin's erotica, is not whether or not these writings are among the best in a critical sense but it is their undeniable influence on contemporary, popular representations of female sexuality. It is hoped that my exploratory analysis of the appearance of images of black women in these two stories may further contribute to understanding the contemporary representations of racialized and sexualized bodies. Of specific concern here are the proliferation of overtly sexualized images of mostly dark-skinned, large-bodied, large-breasted women who are presented as objects of ridicule and spectacle in various media including greeting cards, print magazines, film, and the Internet. The erotic gaze is more often than not on these women's breasts. However these are not the idealized Playboy breasts of so-called "men's magazines" but Mammy's breasts! These breasts are no longer covered by an apron but displayed simultaneously as sexual objects and grotesque spectacle. Similarly, Nin's stories, disrobe black, female, domestic workers from below the ubiquitous "voluminous skirts," exposing them, as it were, to the stories' protagonists and to the readers as essentialized sexual creatures whose scent is their announcement.

I suggest that the figurative and literal stripping of black women in these two stories should be considered in light of the contradictory images of the sexed/non-sexed maternal, sexualized black body on which the contemporary, visual, pornographic images are based. This contradiction is also the basis of "racial collectibles" (including cheaply-produced cookie jars, figurines, post cards and other common, household items) which sometimes featured black women as the butt of sexual jokes. The connections between these crudely-

drawn stereotypic images (which proliferated in the late nineteenth and for the first half of the twentieth century, circulated through the wide availability of mass-produced, low-cost, consumer products), contemporary pornographic websites and other electronic media dedicated to fetishized black (though not exclusively so), maternal, sexual bodies should be explored. This exploration also needs to encompass "the erotic," including the erotica produced by Nin, which by name and reputation alone is not commonly thought of in association with these images. My last statement, in particular, and this paper, in general, is not meant as a repudiation of Nin's work, but is meant to underscore the need to make connections between different areas of cultural representation, including the erotic (read art in some people's estimation) and pornographic (read "smutty" in other people's estimation) in analyzing the ways in which raced and sexed bodies are constructed.

[1]This image is part of the online collection of the Jim Crow Museum of Feminist Memorabilia at Ferris State University <http://www.ferris.edu/news/jimcrow/> and is used with permission. The museum is curated by David Pilgrim and the images of the artefacts are accompanied by contextualizing essays by James Thorp.

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Elizabeth M. Johnson

Mothering in the Poems of Sharon Olds

The Choice Not to Abuse

Sharon Olds wants to be a good mother. She wants to care for her children in the best way possible, to protect them and see to their needs, physical and psychic. We hear her almost desperate commitment to her children in every poem she writes about them. Olds, or her poetic persona, did not learn as a child from the example of her own mother how to be a good at the job. As she catalogues relentlessly in her poems, hers was an abusive household dominated by an alcoholic father and a weak, complicit mother. Many children in such situations grow up to replicate the patterns they learned and become themselves abusers. Others make the superhuman effort to learn new, healthier ways to relate to children; Sharon Olds is one of these. In her poems she confronts the damage of her past and how it shaped her, and she explores her reconstruction of herself into a fiercely aware and attentive mother.

It is important to say at the outset that the persona of these poems may or may not be reporting on the life of the poet, but it is fair to say also that there is little distance created poetically between the writer and the "I" of the poems. Most are urgently in the first person, and those in the third person are very similar in stance, tone, and subject. Because the voice of the poems seems to be very close to the voice of the poet, I will refer to the woman speaking in the poems as Sharon Olds, at the same time acknowledging that she is a created persona with created parents and children about whom this story is told.

For both the literal and metaphoric explications of her move from abused childhood to healthy adulthood, Olds' chosen site is the physical body in all its observable attributes: large, small, hard, soft, dull, dark, slippery, shiny. She begins with her father's body, then moves to her own, and finally to her children's. Interestingly, she addresses her mother's body infrequently and only late in the poems. A hallmark of her poetic stance is her willingness to look at

even the most private parts of the body and to report what she sees in frank detail and language. The effect is arresting. Critics have variously praised her forthrightness and squirmed about it. One cannot read these poems without confronting one's own attitude toward the physical and sexual as well as toward what a daughter can see and say about a parent, what a woman can say about herself, and what a mother can see and say about a child. Olds gazes openly at her children's bodies. Breaking with the conventions of delicacy and silence around a mother's awareness of children's physicality and sexuality, she tells us what she sees and what it means to her. She may or may not transgress the boundaries of propriety; she may even, as some critics suggest, cross the border between explication and exploitation. Examination of her poems, however, does reveal how Olds represents her relationships, emotions, and psychic development through close observation of the body as a site of meaning and metaphor, and does trace the etiology of her gaze upon her children as an outgrowth of her established pattern of seeing and knowing through the body.

I. The daughter

The poetry explored in this study is contained in Olds's first three volumes, *Satan Says* (1980), *The Dead and the Living* (1984), and *The Gold Cell* (1987:), as well as the fifth volume, *The Wellspring* (1996).[1] Olds has divided each collection into sections that follow similar trajectories, laying out the transformation she is reporting as the persona develops from daughter to sexual woman to mother.

The opening poem of the first book, eponymously titled "Satan Says," sets the stage. The speaker issues a challenge to herself to say the unsayable and a challenge to her readers to stand fast with her. She knows she will break some rules. In the poem the persona is locked in a box where Satan visits her to tempt her to speak.

> Satan
> comes to me in the locked box
> and says, *I'll get you out. Say*
> *My father is a shit.* I say
> my father is a shit and Satan
> laughs and says, *It's opening.*
> *Say your mother is a pimp.*
> My mother is a pimp. Something
> breaks when I say that.
> My spine uncurls in the cedar box. (1980: 3)

Daring to name the evil that has been done to her, she senses release as she begins to extricate herself from the family dynamic. "*Don't you feel better?*" Satan asks as he encourages her to say more, "*Say shit, say death, say fuck the father.*" It is interesting that she posits the act of speaking out as the temptation of the

devil, and therefore evil. Speaking out will have consequences, and she is frightened even as the poem insists on the need to speak of "the pain of the lost past" and to break the oppression of silence. What a therapist would likely read as a healthy expression of emotion arising from past pain, the poet represents as a guilty pleasure and then negates with assertions of love for the abusing parent. "I love him, too ... I say to Satan ... I love but am trying to say what happened to us in the lost past." This reference to "us" suggests that they are all victims, the parents as well as the child, a theme to which she will return in *The Dead and the Living* in poems about her grandfather, also an abuser. Allusions to her mother's role in the abuse are rare and unclear after this initial accusation that she is a "pimp," an accessory to the abuse rather than oblivious to it. Researchers in the field of child abuse have noted that women who were abused as children "disidentify with their own mothers, regardless of whether the perpetrator was the mother or the father.... [They] characterize themselves in their role as mother in very different terms than they use to describe their childhood memories of their own mothers" (Gara, Allen, Herzog, and Woolfolk, 2000: 629). In this light the little Olds offers about her mother corroborates psychosocial findings.

Satan continues to tempt her to utter more words and to come out of the box, but she sees that the air outside is "thick as hot smoke." The constriction of the box, which is the evil she knows, has the security of the familiar; the smoke outside is a damnation that may be worse. Faced with that choice, she confesses the "sudden knowledge of love." Abused children regularly report that they love their parents, the only parents and the only kind of parenting they know. Olds' abused child claims and relies on her love for her parents and remains in the cedar box, fearful, but already "uncurling" by naming the evil that has been done to her.

The poems present an ugly picture of physical and emotional abuse. What is less clear is whether her father's abuse included sexual molestation. There are references to being "under him" that connote subjugation but not necessarily sex. A poem entitled "Night Terrors" opens with "She has so strongly this sense of someone coming after her ... some man so angry, so clever, there is no/ chance of survival" (1980: 11). Although the man is not identified, he is stalking their house, which she sees as "her own mother entered and entered by that man she hated." The tone of dread and sex suggests rape or fear of rape, and in the poem the girl tries to find a way to control the situation: "Every night she tries to think of something that would / get him to spare the children," as if a child could or should have such a power.

The speaker of these poems frequently expresses feelings of guilt for the abuse, as abused children often do. If the abuse is physical, they may report having brought a beating upon themselves, perhaps by not performing a household chore, voicing such thoughts as "If only I hadn't upset him, he wouldn't have hit me;" or "It's my fault he hurt me because I didn't clean my room." Olds' speaker expresses fear she will be sent to Alcatraz because her

"inner badness had spread like ink ... and they had often said/ they would send me there—maybe the very next time I spilled my milk," this passage a child's heartbreaking indictment of self ("Alcatraz" 1987: 28). If the abuse is sexual, the victimized children may believe that it is their fantasies and desires for closeness that cause the adult to molest them, and the abuser may confirm this by invoking secrecy and calling the child a slut or some other pejorative term. Olds describes feeling herself attracted to the father's "massive, meaty" body, and his presence is clearly a sexual one to her as she begins to grow into her own sexuality. There are many references to his genitals in all three volumes: "Your sex stiffening in textbook time" ("The Ideal Father" 1984: 38), "his sad sex dangling on his thigh" ("Fate" 1984: 40). She writes of his breasts, "the polished silk of the hair / running down them delicately like / water" ("My Father's Breasts" 1984: 43). This voice feels complicit in something. Being in the wrong herself, she does not have to condemn him, whose love she needs and desperately desires. In "Fate" she says, "Finally I just gave up and became my father," equating her self with his, her body with his.

Another aspect of the assumption of guilt is a kind of magical thinking in which the abused person takes responsibility for the abuser's actions as a way to feel some control, to feel that one has some power in a powerless position. Echoes of this powerlessness are clear in Olds' poems; echoes of her attempt to retain some power by assuming guilt are also present. In "Love Fossil" (1980: 5), where she has described her father as a dinosaur "made of raw steak ... his jaw dripping weeds and bourbon," she sees herself as a "carnivore" and says, "I did not understand ... my taste for his big dangerous body." It is unlikely that her reference to "taste" indicates that she is seducing him, although it is one of the few overt suggestions that the abuse may include oral sex. Certainly it indicates her need to love him and be loved. Her conflicting feelings of love and betrayal induce guilt as one way to make sense of what is happening. Research on parent-child attachment reports that children whose attachment has been an "anxious" process find it difficult to grow "emotionally independent" (Sroufe, 1996: 189) when compared with those who have developed secure attachments that allow them to explore independently while using the parent as a "mobile source of security who can be referenced across a distance" (Sroufe 178). Olds' continuous reworking of her relationship with her father, and later her mother, bespeaks attachment that, while certainly anxious, is no less essential to her sense of self.

II. The woman

In the next section of each book, the sexual woman section, Olds explores her adolescent and adult sexuality, transferring her gaze from her family members' bodies to her own and to the bodies of her partners. These sections are replete with scenes of copulation and images of genitals. Some of the metaphors are unusual and unsettling, like that of the penis as a tumescent slug ("The Connoisseuse of Slugs" (1984: 51). She begins her sexual explorations

conventionally, however, as a girl peeping through the dressing room at the swimming pool to watch the boys changing clothes ("California Swimming Pool," 1987: 47) or as an adolescent parking and necking with her boyfriend ("First Boyfriend," 1987: 48). The expected images—"your tongue went down my throat"—intensify in this poem: "Your front seat had an overpowering/ male smell, as if the chrome had been / rubbed with jism." The poet then makes the connection with her father: "I / returned to you as if to the breast of my father ... as if I had come / back to a pawnshop to claim what was mine." Her sexuality and personal power are indeed tied up with her father's, and through her adult sexual experiences she will have to demarcate what she will retain from that connection and what she will let go.

The poems in this section of each book describe sex and body parts in the language of slang and make use of puns like "nuts," "balls." Line breaks, too, contribute to a salacious tone; the line frequently breaks after "come," no matter in what sense the verb is used.

The male body is not the only one described. In poems such as "A Woman in Heat Wiping Herself" and "I Cannot Forget the Woman in the Mirror" from *The Gold Cell*, Olds examines her female anatomy. In the latter poem she is

> Backwards and upside down in the twilight, that
> woman on all fours, her head
> dangling and suffused, her lean
> haunches
> ... ... those
> breasts hanging down
> ... ... and her
> tongue long and black as an anteater's
> going toward his body, she was so clearly an
> animal ... (61)

She compares herself to a tiger, "I lay the massive / weight of my body down on you/ like a tiger lying down in gluttony" ("Greed and Aggression," 1987: 56) and her genitals to a "lily with a wound on it" ("It," 1987: 57). There are poems about sex occurring in many positions, during menstruation, and without penetration after childbirth. Gradually, poems of genital and oral sex, of cocks and open legs, begin to give way to poems about the persons with whom she is having sex.

When she recalls the first young man she loved, who died in an accident, the tone changes from the celebration of sexual feeling and freedom. She describes not sex but tenderness and vulnerability, "I was letting it all in ... I was in love and I could take it" ("First Love," 1987: 51). In love she finds something new, something more than she has known so far about sex and the body. "Love," she says, "invents the body that is not an object" ("The Love Object" 1980: 32), a suggestion not just of feminist concern but of awareness that she herself has

objectified the body as she has attempted to learn from it. Olds' frequently anthologized poem, "Sex Without Love," begins, "How do they do it, the ones who make love / without love?" Clearly, Olds has learned something new about sex and the body, or more accurately, about love, a kind of love not conflated with abuse, as she had perceived it in her childhood. "How do they come to the ... still waters, and not love / the one who came there with them" (1984: 57).

In married love this persona finds wonder. Making love after childbirth, she "lay in fear and blood and milk" seeing her husband above her "with the patience of someone who / finds a wounded animal in the woods / and stays with it, not leaving its side / until it is whole, until it can run again" (New Mother" 1984: 53). In poems still heavy with sex and sexual language, she celebrates their love, especially his willingness to love her in spite of the legacy of pain and potential trouble she fears she carries:

> I have always admired your courage. As I see you
> embracing me, in the mirror, I see I am
> my father as a woman, I see you bravely
> embrace him in me, putting your life in his
> hands as mine...
> ... ...
> You are fearless, you
> enter him as a woman ...
> ... ...
> ... you entrust your children to that
> man as a mother, his hands as my hands
> cupped around their tiny heads... .
>
> —"Poem to My Husband from My Father's Daughter" (1984: 56)

They are her children, too, although she hardly dares to claim them. Attachment will take time. As philosopher Sara Ruddick (1989) has posited, taking on the protective and nurturing characteristics of maternal practice, whether on a conscious or sub-conscious level, is an act of choice, an acceptance of long-term responsibility for the well-being of a child. Olds voices her fear that she will instead replicate the abuse she endured, as so many children of abuse do. Psychosocial studies indicate that most abusers were themselves abused as children and, suggest that fully one-third of all abused children will go on to be abusers (Gara *et al.,* 2000: 627). By now, however, Olds has confronted that example so aggressively that she will certainly be on guard against it. Surely she has been fortunate to choose a partner with whom there is mutual care and respect, but it is not all luck. From the conflicted love and abuse of her childhood, Sharon Olds has come out of the cedar box and said what Satan tempted her to say. This persona has acquired the power to overcome the past and to position herself for healthy relationships as partner and parent. The injured girl will become a fierce and attentive mother.

III. The mother

In the long career of mothering, Olds will turn consistently to the body, her own and each of her children's, to decipher what she knows at a given moment and to discover what she needs to know next. After her well-known poem about birth, "The Language of the Brag" (1980: 44), with its heroic images of sweat, blood, and mucus, and the Young Mother series with such animal metaphors as "her breasts like white wolves' heads" protecting the baby ("Young Mothers II," 1980: 41), Olds' poetic corpus includes few poems about her children as infants and toddlers. The gap between the celebratory performance of giving birth and the quotidian performance of reflective mothering suggests that the persona begins to apprehend and claim the responsibility of mothering only gradually. The poems about the children emerge as they grow into more complex beings, and, one might conclude, as the mother engages in and comes to accept her work. Then, from the distance of her poetic gaze, she can study them and observe the space between them and her. The poems are her analysis of what she sees and what she learns as their mother.

Her gaze on her bathing daughter in "Fish Story" (1980: 46) is an example. She observes the little body moving about in the water, at first comparing it to a fish, "that whole / glazed torso like a fish, / the firm slit a noncommittal fish mouth / smiling neither way." That very original image of the genitals surprises the reader, both in its visual acuity and in its interpretation as "noncommittal," simply a part of the body on its own, neither inviting, enticing, nor repulsing the onlooker. The next image is of the child as a mermaid, a liminal identity between fish and human, which she then equates with the child's growth from fetus to separate human being, "this sleek / stretching child, this glittering eel / who used to be a shrimp in her sea / this woman she once had firmly in her body." Observing the child's now separate body reinforces for the mother the important fact that her children grow beyond her, subtly articulating the conflict between attachment and letting go. The poem's images move steadily toward the mother's realization that this girl is already "the fish that got away." Her conflicted response to this new awareness is an ironic statement about their bodily connection, "the fact she is supposed to forget."

The daughter, Liddy

Liddy is approaching adolescence. Olds' observations here focus on the girl's incipient sexual development and serve as a touchstone for the mother to reflect on her own. "Eggs" introduces the situation.

> My daughter has turned against eggs. Age six
> to nine, she cooked them herself ...
> ... ...
> ... now she
> cries she wants to quit eggs.
> It gets on her hands, it's slimy, and it's hard

to get all the little things out:
puddles of gluten glisten on the counter
with small, curled shapes floating in their
sexual smear. She moans. It is getting
too close. Next birthday she's ten and then
it's open season, no telling when
the bright, crimson dot appears
like the sign on a fertilized yolk. She has carried
all her eggs in the two baskets
woven into her fine side,
but soon they'll be slipping down gently,
sliding. She grips the counter where the raw
whites jump, and the spiral shapes
signal from the glittering gelatine, and she
wails for her life. (1984: 63)

The language and imagery of this poem capture preadolescence, in all its seriousness and hilarity. Behavior that was ordinary and self-sufficient is gone, replaced by high emotion. The "small curled shapes" now seem sexual, and the drama of reproduction plays out in the ensuing images. The "smear" suggests the Pap test to be conducted at the time of the first vaginal exam. "Open season" suggests mating rituals and how vulnerable girls are to sexual predation, a fact the mother knows too well. Her moans prefigure childbirth as well as sex. "It's getting too close," the mother observes—for both of them. In the most poignant image, she sees the girl's maturing ovaries as "two baskets/ woven into her fine side;" from them the eggs will be "slipping down gently," an action that affirms the normalcy of it all, though the girl recoils and, evoking both childbirth again and the presence of an infant, "wails for her life."

Olds watches the girl's changing body. In "Pre-Adolescent in Spring" (1984: 69) the mother sees the girl in images of emerging growth. Her buttocks are like "an unripe apricot," her cool skin like the still-intact "casing of milkweed pods, her hair "smoking." Around them the mother senses the "pine forest, its hot resin smell like a / smell of sex" and "the flat spears of bulbs ...rising from inside the ground." "Above us the buds are opening," she says, as they hold tight to each other, the girl's body "heavy, / its layers still folded, its fragrance only half unlocked." Coolness gives way to heat-producing growth as ice cubes are "now rapidly / melting in her mouth."

In another poem the girl's pajamas, lying inside out, are likened to the "peeled skin of peaches when you ease the / whole skin off at once" ("Pajamas" 1984: 71). The mother imagines her emerging as from the "skin the caterpillar / ramped out of and left to shrivel."

You can see, there at the center of the bottoms,
the raised cotton seam like the line

down the center of fruit, where the skin first splits
and curls back. You can almost see the hard
halves of her young buttocks, the precise
stem-mark of her sex.

Acutely aware of the girl's sexuality, the mother observes from a distance, a safe and respectful space not preserved in her childhood home. She looks at the pajamas, does not fondle them. In another poem, the girl is baking bread:

... random specks of
yeast in her flesh beginning to heat,
her volume doubling every month now, but still
raw and hard. She slaps the dough and it
crackles under her palm, sleek and
ferocious and still leashed, like her body, no
breasts rising like bubbles of air toward the
surface of the loaf ...

Though her fertility is still contained, the mother feels its imminence. The girl becomes one with the metaphor as in the poem's language *she*, not the dough, is said to be

shaped, glazed, and at any moment goes
into the oven, to turn to that porous
warm substance, and then under the
knife to be sliced for the having, the tasting, and the
giving of life.

—"Bread" (1984: 77)

Fear for Liddy emanates from the knife image, evoking the tearing of first sex as well as of birth.

That fear does not, however, dominate the poet's perceptions. Coming to terms with her daughter's sexuality and eventual separation from her, this mother does not attempt to deny what is happening or to hold the girl back. In "For My Daughter" (1984: 65) she imagines her daughter's first sexual experience. "That night will come." In this opening line the mother asserts her acceptance, continuing,

... Somewhere someone will be
entering you, his body riding
under your white body, dividing
your blood from your skin ...
... ...
... the delicate

threads between your legs curled
like stitches broken. The center of your body
will tear open, as a woman will rip the
seam of her skirt so she can run.

The language of breaking, of stitches broken, the image of an unknown man, evoke the mother's fear, but then she gives the girl agency, "as a *woman* will rip," and purpose, "so *she* can run" [emphasis mine]. The girl will not be an object or victim, as the mother felt herself to have been. The rest of the poem affirms their relative roles:

... It will happen,
and when it happens I will be right here
in bed with your father, as when you learned to read
you would go off and read in your room
as I read in mine, versions of the story
that changes in the telling, the story of the river.

Those critics who castigate Olds for her treatment of her children's bodies fail to see the story of the river being expressed in them. Children change. Mothers change and must learn wisdom. The first poem of Sharon Olds that I encountered, the one that drew me to her work, is an expression of the concessions one must make to gain that wisdom.

35/10

Brushing out my daughter's dark
silken hair before the mirror
I see the grey gleaming on my head,
the silver-haired servant behind her. Why is it
just as we begin to go
they begin to arrive, the fold in my neck
clarifying as the fine bones of her
hips sharpen? As my skin shows
its dry pitting, she opens like a small
pale flower on the tip of a cactus;
as my last chances to bear a child
are falling through my body, the duds among them,
her full purse of eggs, round and
firm as hard-boiled yolks, is about
to snap its clasp. I brush her tangled
fragrant hair at bedtime. It's an old
story—the oldest we have on our planet—
the story of replacement.

Liddy does not open like a rose, that romantic flower, but like the flower of a cactus, surrounded by thorns. We can hear the hiss of the ovary ready to "snap its clasp," a hiss both humorous and ominous, as the mother's ova decline in this unromantic telling. The story, however bittersweet, is the right story, and the mother has drawn clear lines between herself and her daughter, a sign that she will not transgress those boundaries the way her own were.

The son, Gabriel

Where poems of her daughter's growth center around her developing fertility and sexuality and cause the mother to reflect on herself, poems about her son examine his power, which she views as outside herself. Where wisps of humor crept into the daughter poems, laughter erupts easily from the son poems. "Five-Year-Old Boy" from *Satan Says* (1980: 56) is a prime example.

> As he talks, he holds
> a kitchen strainer in his hand. At the end of
> the conversation, the handle is twisted,
> the mesh burst—he looks down at it
> amazed... .
> ... ...
> ... Nothing is safe
> near this boy. He stands on the porch, peeing
> into the grass, watching a bird
> fly around the house, and ends up
> pissing on the front door. Afterward he
> twangs his penis. Long after
> the last drops fly into the lawn,
> he stands there gently rattling his dick,
> his face full of intelligence,
> his white, curved forehead slightly
> puckered in thought ...
> ... ...
> abstractly he shakes himself
> once more
> and the house collapses
> to the ground behind him.

Olds has contended with male power before, especially the oppressive power of her father. One might expect her to have a guarded response to a son's manifestations of power. Not so here. This mother is charmed by the innocence of Gabriel's strength. Although her image of the twisted strainer suggests the potential for danger implicit in power, Gabe is unmindful of what his strength can do. Although the house does fall down, the colloquial language of the poem works against danger, and the image of the boy focuses on his thoughtfulness.

Olds deepens her exploration of her son's power and growth in poems on the verso pages of the children section of *The Dead and the Living*, paralleled on the recto leaves with the poems about Liddy's developing fertility. Although she is aware of Gabe's sexual body, she is engaged with it more as an outside observer, more mystified by it than moved by the shock of recognition she feels with her daughter. In "Six-Year-Old Boy" (1980: 62) the mother wakes him after a long night's drive and urges him to urinate by the side of the road. She has seen in the back seat that "his hard-on lifts his pajamas like the / earth about the shoot of a bulb." She describes his penis as "hard as a heavy-duty canvas fire-hose / shooting its steel stream," an image of power, but Gabe is "blissful" and "grinning," and half-asleep, the picture of innocence. The mother is aware, however, though the child may not be, of his incipient phallic power as he stands there, "his sex pointing straight ahead, / leading him / as if by the nose / into his life."

In contrast to her preoccupation with Liddy's internal physiology, Olds reports on Gabe's growth in terms of what she can see, visible size and strength. An examination of his pajamas focuses on how fast he is growing out of them, "elongated/ wrists dangling, lean meat / showing between the shirt and the belt." The title, "Size and Sheer Will," (1984: 64) suggests his active intention to get bigger, as do the poem's images.

> If there were a rack to stretch himself, he would
> strap his slight body to it.
> If there were a machine to enter,
> skip the next ten years and be
> sixteen immediately, this boy would
> do it. All day long he cranes his
> neck, like a plant in the dark with a single
> light above it, or a sailor under
> tons of green water, longing
> for the surface, for his rightful life.

His rightful life will include an examination of the violence that can be associated with male power. In "The Killer" (1984: 72) the mother notices that "Whenever there's a lull in the action, my son / sights along his invisible sights and / picks things off," and she sees his pleasure in it: "a hit, you can tell by the flames and / smoke reflected in his glittering eyes." Not threatened but puzzled, the mother reflects, "yet I know this boy, / kind and tender," and she assesses his play as a way of "marking each thing / with the sign of his small ecstatic life." Acknowledging that his play mimics the territoriality associated with war, she refuses the connotation of evil, preferring instead to interpret his ecstasy as a vital enthusiasm. In the next poem about him, however, she addresses his vulnerability in a world where power is tested. They are attending a museum

exhibit of armor, Gabe fascinated, the mother satiated waiting on a bench as he studies each display.

I see him
facing a case of shields, fingering
the sweater over his heart, and then
for a long time I don't see him, as a mother will
lose her son in war. I sit
and think about men. Finally Gabe
comes back, sated, so fattened with gore
his eyelids bulge. We exit under the
huge tumescent jousting irons,
... ...
... He slips his hand
lightly in mine, and says *Not one of those*
suits is really safe. But when we
get to the wide museum steps
... ...
he can't resist,
and before my eyes, down the stairs,
over and over, clutching his delicate
unprotected chest, Gabriel
dies, and dies.
—"Armor" (1984: 74)

The power here is male (tumescent) and hungry (sated, fattened), and the mother fears it even as her boy can't resist it. As he touches his heart, she sees his vulnerability, knows the limit of her capacity to protect him, however ecstatically he goes toward his life.

Where the daughter poems are infused with worry and anticipation about the private world of the body, the son poems fill with humor, even those concerned that he grow into goodness and be safe. Often quoted and hilarious, "Rite of Passage" (1984: 66) encapsulates the mother's understanding of this child of a different sex—and celebrates it.

As the guests arrive at my son's party
they gather in the living room—
short men, men in first grade
with smooth jaws and chins.
Hands in pockets, they stand around
jostling, jockeying for place, small fights
breaking out and calming. One says to another
How old are you? Six? I'm seven. So?
They eye each other, seeing themselves

tiny in the other's pupils. They clear their
throats a lot, a room of small bankers,
they fold their arms and frown. I could beat you
up, a seven says to a six,
the dark cake, round and heavy as a
turret, behind them on the table. My son,
freckles like specks of nutmeg on his cheeks,
... ...
... speaks up as a host
for the sake of the group.
We could easily kill a two-year-old,
he says in his clear voice. The other
men agree, they clear their throats
like Generals, they relax and get down to
laying war, celebrating my son's life.

The threat is there, all the potential future violence mirrored in the turret-cake and the dominance over a two-year-old, all the economic power of small bankers, but in the end the mother is chuckling, celebrating her boy, and her readers laugh in recognition of the inscrutable dynamics of it all.

Celebration becomes tempered with a more thoughtful approach to the son's development as he enters adolescence. It isn't until *The Wellspring* that the poems begin to examine his maturation, but these poems do not refer to his powers of reproduction the way the poems about Liddy do. They draw on what the mother can see, and they frequently refer to his clothing—his outgrown jeans, a jacket with big shoulders, the polo shirts he stops wearing at age twelve. He also lets her know, in lines that speak to the conversations they must have in that family, what she doesn't understand about him and about boys in general:

You think that boys have all the power,
he says, but it's the girls who let you
know if the one you like will say yes,
and then, if you're lucky, you ask her.
—"The Transformed Boy" (1997: 63)

It's not just sex and reproduction that concerns her now but the gender into which he is growing. As she has claimed agency for Liddy as a sexual being, we see from this wisp of conversation that she has attempted to talk with Gabe about his privileged status in socially constructed gender roles, perhaps to ameliorate his potential for the patriarchal/phallic power she has accepted with humor so far.

Now the humor turns serious: "I know I must get ready, / get over my fear of men now my son / is going to be one" ("My Son the Man" 1997: 67). Until

now Olds has not equated her son with her father in these poems, but as his body gives evidence of his approaching manhood, she cannot avoid it. All along she has been amused by her son's curiosity, touched by his compassion, and perhaps even surprised by his innocence. It is vitally important to her that she find goodness in her children, the daughter in whom she has seen the "Sign of Saturn" (1984: 73), the god who ate his children whom she associates with her father; and the son who belongs to a gender she has cause to fear, even though she has reported in other poems a better kind of manhood in her husband.

In the poems about her children Olds lays out a kind of parenting she did not receive, nor, apparently, did her father, whose own father seems to have set the pattern for cruelty and abuse. The poems in *Satan Says*, first speaking out against her father's abuse, do not show awareness of the family history of abuse. Several in *The Dead and the Living* do, among them "The Guild" (1984: 17), "The Eye" (1984: 19), and "Of All the Dead That Have Come to Me, This Once" (1984: 21). Olds calls the grandfather a "brutal man" saying, "He taught my father/ how to do what he did to me" and speaks of her father as his "apprentice ... that young man/ not yet cruel ... who would pass his master in cruelty and oblivion" (1984: 17). It is no wonder that with a history such as hers this woman feared what she could do to children. It *is* a wonder that she, or any abused child, has taught herself a very different kind of parenting—and love—from what she learned at home.

Bathing the Newborn

I love with an almost fearful love
to remember the first baths I gave him—
... ...
... When I got him too soapy he'd
slide in my grip ... but I'd hold him not too tight,
I felt I was good for him,
I'd tell him about his wonderful body
... ...
... I love that time
when you croon and croon to them, you can see
the calm slowly entering them, you can
sense it in your clasping hand,
the little spine relaxing against
the muscle of your forearm, you feel the fear
leaving their bodies. (1997: 45)

Both maternal love and love for her husband are expressed in the poems. From earlier ones in which she is surprised that he loves her to the later poems in *The Wellspring*, deeply moving poems about conjugal love reflect a progres-

sion through knowledge and commitment to mature love. As is her mode, Olds expresses connection through the "body university," describing her sexual life with her husband in explicit visual and tactile terms. Her metaphors are arresting as always: They are "dragonflies / in the sun, 100 degrees at noon, / the ends of their abdomens stuck together" ("Last Night" 1997: 86). Sex and the body are as self-defining to this persona as ever, its wellspring. Seeking understanding, she says about her genitals, "Central inside me this one I am and am not," and asks, "Is it my soul in there?" ("Am and Am Not" 1997: 87). Sex, she says, "became the deep spring of my life" ("The Source" 1997: 33). Sex and birth have been connected throughout these volumes, as "central meanings" to which she must be "faithful" ("Prayer" 1980: 72):

> that is the center of life, that moment when the
> juiced bluish sphere of the baby is
> sliding between two worlds,
> wet, like sex, it *is* sex
> —"The Moment the Two Worlds Meet" (1987: 67)

The central meanings are not just genital. With her children and husband she has learned love. In Part Four of *The Wellspring*, in the poems about her husband, she slows her pace from the intensity of the dragonfly poem and focuses more on their relationship. "This Hour" (79) begins, "We could never really say what it is like,/ this hour of drinking wine together/ on a hot summer night" and alludes to the things they talk about—their son at camp, their fathers' deaths. The poem moves slowly through sleepiness and tears as if to savor the sense of their shared life; it ends not on the physicality of sex; rather, it knows that they will *make love*, a significant change of language, and it culminates in that knowledge.

> Yes, we know we will make love, but we're
> not getting ready to make love,
> nor are we getting over making love,
> love is simply our element,
> it is the summer night, we are in it.

For a woman who reported witnessing no such communion between her parents, to have this love must surely be a treasure. She has learned this love along with the love of children. The final poem of *The Wellspring* acknowledges yet another dimension of their relationship:

> In the middle of the night, when we get up
> after making love, we look at each other in
> complete friendship, we know so fully

what the other has been doing... .
... ...
...we are bound to each other
with huge invisible threads ... surely this
is the most blessed time of my life ...
("True Love" 1997: 88)

Love is friendship, is a bond, is sexual connection, is maternal connection, is blessed. From the raw material of childhood abuse, Sharon Olds has constructed an adult, mothering life through experience, desire, and a determined act of choice.

[1]The fourth, *The Father* (1992), focuses on the father's death from cancer and is not examined here, nor is the latest, *Blood, Tin, Straw* (1999).

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Becky Lee

Wombs are Treacherous Things

My womb is dying. My womb is dying.
This refrain runs through my head
with each menstrual period now.
Predictable and familiar for so long,
my body has begun to bleed at unpredictable times
and in unfamiliar ways,
presaging the end of my fertility.
The words surprise me.
Their source is a mystery.
Is it grief?
Is it joy?

Oh, wombs are treacherous things.
Just ask my mother.
A womb is what defines a woman,
makes her desirable,
makes her valuable.
For, what is a woman,
who is a woman,
if she isn't someone's wife
and someone's mother?
I refuse to become a wife
or a mother
like her.
That troubles her,
frightens her.

Becky Lee

If I don't become someone's wife
I will always be
her child,
her responsibility,
her burden.
If I don't become someone's mother
I will never be
part of the sisterhood of suffering.

For wombs are treacherous things.
Hers was not strong enough to birth the baby
conceived in her conjugal bed.
It had to be cut open
and stitched shut.
And the baby that formed within it
was not perfect,
but a misshapen
and obdurate creature,
ungrateful for her sacrifice
and unwilling to emulate it.
So my mother reminds me.

Yes, wombs are treacherous things.
We cannot choose
the womb that bears us
or whom we harbour there.
We are defined
by the womb within us.
This ought to bind
mother and daughter.
It has driven us apart.
"Why can't you be like me?!"
"Why must I be like you?!"

My womb is dying. My womb is dying.
Painful reminder
of my mother,
resentful, demanding,
I rejoice
that it will soon be silent.
Last connection
with she who bore me,
I am saddened
that it will soon be still.

Dannabang Kuwabong

"Una Nación No Sera Conquistada" When the Women Take Up Their Medicine

Venerating the Native Mother through Malinche in Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots

Monique Mojica's *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots*, published in 1991, is the Native Canadian response to the celebration of 500 years of European intrusion, conquest, and pillage of the Americas, which began with Christopher Columbus in 1492. As a post-intervention drama, it seeks to unify, consolidate, and positively reincorporate divergent female Indian foremothers into Native nationalist feminist histories of the Americas. Among these foremothers is Malinche. In her play, Mojica also honors the figures of Pocahontas of the United States, Women of the Puna, and Madeline of Canada. Nonetheless, this well-scripted Native Canadian text remains largely unknown in Canada. Thus, I contextualize my reading within theoretical frames set for reading the Malinche narrative in the United States and South America. I align myself initially to Sandra Messinger Cypress's historical analysis of the various literary attempts to recuperate and revalorize the historical Malinche. I then explore Mojica's play as a deconstruction of the semiotics of popular interpretations of Malinche "as the first *chingada*, the incarnation of sexual openness that led to the rape of America by the foreigner," and the "romantic interpretation that she betrayed the Indians because of her great love for Cortez" (1991: 125-126).

On the one hand, my exegetical postulations of Mojica's Malinche are influenced by postcolonial, anti-imperial politics of race and gender. But on the other hand, my reading is situated in anthropomorphic narratives of the pre- and post- intervention periods in Mesoamerica. Subsequently, my reading is underscored by what Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins have called the play's refutation of "singular all-encompassing identities ... [to] dismantle the maelstrom of images that have defined the Indian" (1996: 49-50). I argue that Mojica's Malinche is a figure with contradictory multidimensional inscriptions that complicate any reduction of her personhood, whether historical or

mythical, and thus bifurcates our understanding of her subjectivity. I contend also that Malinche, as reconstructed by Mojica, embody multiple sexualities and gender positionalities that refuse containment in the often limiting Whore/Madonna paradigm postulated in those same Mexican/Chicano discourses from which I set off in my explication of the text.

The recuperation of Malinche by Chicano/a writers and critics, writes Marcella Lucero-Trujillo, as a positive icon of personal and collective quests of identity, is often instigated by the "sexist microcosmic Chicano World of machismo, and the alienation of being a Chicano woman in the larger macrocosmic white male club" (1997: 621) that governs the Americas. Mojica's *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* hence needs to be read initially as a conscious interrogation of historical and cultural narratives about Native peoples, and appropriation of recent Latina, Chicana, and Mestiza socio-political ascendancy and racial pride to affirm her "identity ... that brown is beautiful" (Lucero-Trujillo, 1997: 621). This affirmation is grounded in historical matrilinearity, a move that initiates Mojica into the family of other feminists of Native American descent who all seek "refuge in the image of the indigenous mother.... the Indian mother as Mother earth" linked "directly with the Mexican Eve, the historical mother, La Malinche," even as they question the "bronze reality in religious themes of the Virgin of Guadalupe, the spiritual mother" (Lucero-Trujillo, 1997: 621). Also, as Marta Sánchez has contended, Mojica's play joins the growing literature produced by other Chicano, Mestizo, and Native feminists that reject the linking of Malinche with La Chingada, while they "restore the catalyzing power of speech [La Lengua] to the historical Malinche" (1998: 118). By these reassessments, the writers transform the negative semantic connotations associated with the actions of the maternal icon of the Mexican nation into tropes of an "affirmative agency (a cultural bridge and translator)" (see also Sánchez, 1985: 183-195). *Princess*, therefore, is rooted in the need to develop new bi-cultural and biracial traditions of American Indian female power, out of what Sequoya-Magdaleno describes as "tribal traditions that transgress the customary modes of self-representation based on those traditions" (1995: 91). *Princess* (Mojica, 1991: 22-25) is thus a dramatized version of the feminist prototype that Cordelia Candelaria (1980: 1-6), and Adelaida del Castillo (1997: 124-149) advocate in Native women's writing.

It is in this vein that Arthur Solomon, a Native Canadian elder advocates that Native "women [must] pick up their medicine in order for the people to continue ... because they are the real leaders and the best leaders in the human family" (1994: 12). To facilitate this new consciousness, he states, men must step aside and "allow women to take their rightful place in the human family," men also must "begin to honor and respect our women again and hear what they are trying to say to us" (1994: 19). Solomon's wisdom in these words echoes an ancient Sioux feminist proverb which says that "no people go down until their women are weak, and dishonored, dead upon the ground" (Tobias. 1982: 9).

Similarly, the idea is encoded in these words of Cheyenne matricentered folk philosophy (Mojica, 1991: 12): "Una nación no sera conquistada hasta que los corazones / de sus mujeres caigan a la tierra./ No importa que los guerreros sean valientes o que sus armas / sean poderosas!" [A nation is not conquered until the hearts of its women / are on the ground. Then, it is done, no matter how brave / its warriors, nor how strong its weapons] (Mojica, 1991: 60).

Subsequently, Kathleen Donovan argues that the "prominence of women in Métis society," therefore makes it "natural that literary texts by Metis women feature strong female characters who resist and subvert domination to effect personal and political change"(1998: 25). Corollary, Mojica affirms that at the turn of the twenty-first century "it is significant that the healers as artists are [women who are] in the vanguard of this critical time" as Native Americans seek a wholeness healing through cultural and historical recuperation (1991: 3). However, this is impossible unless as Maria Gonzalez points out, men translate their veneration of their mothers into a veneration of womanhood, and retreat from continually perceiving women through the lenses of the Madonna/ Whore dichotomy (1996: 156). Thus, as Sandra Messinger Cypress has suggested, "one way to break the stranglehold of a [negative] pattern [of self or group perception] from the past is to repudiate the paradigm of behavior associated with the traditional national myth" (1991: 121). Thus, Mojica's play, like the work of Carlos Fuentes, "contributes to this positive national agenda by presenting a new configuration of the Malinche role" (Cypress, 1991: 121).

Leaning thus on these precepts, and with a desire to reclaim a dynamic and complex matrilineage from the wrecks of history, Mojica employs, in *Princess*, the techniques of "primordial clusters of association" (Rich, 1985: 98) to frame the story of Malinche, and to construct a formidable feminist dramatic narrative that refutes the phallocentric representation of Malinche as a mere vessel of "abject passivity" (Paz, 1961: 85) within Mestizo historiography. Through a dramatized symbiosis of gynocentric motherhood discourse, represented on stage by childbirth, and Native American cosmogony, reflected in the ceremony of corn to the four spheres of Nahua universe: earth, sky, ocean deeps, and underworld (Sandstrom, 1982: 31), Mojica creates a ritual and ceremony for matrilineage recovery in which Malinche is reformulated as a proactive caldron of social and racial transformation. The ceremony of corn establishes a geomorphological foundation, while the staged birthing process reconnects the procreative bonding down generations of women within North and South America (Mojica, 1991: 12). From these platforms, Malinche articulates her re-visionary re-presentation of her personhood within recognizable cultural and biological affiliations.

In the history of Mexico, Malinche is often defined as either La Chingada/ traitor/whore, mala madre, maldita Malinche, cabrona, and La Puta, the Whore, or Santa Maria/Santa Marina/Santa Malinche/Dona Marina, La Llorona, La Virgen de Guadalupe, or La Virgen Morena. According to Bobette Gugliotta, Malinche or Doña Marina's true name was Malinali in

Nahuatl, but corrupted to Malin-che as a "result of the suffix 'che' being used to indicate respect in the mother tongue by the natives" (Gugliotta, 1989: 2). She was among the first group of gift girls presented to Córtez (Gugliotta, 1989: 2-3). Mojica's play is the Canadian contribution to the growing list of Chicano and Mexican recuperative drama on Malinche. Mojica joins writers such as Carlos Fuentes (1970), Sabina Berman (1985), Rosario Castellanos (1988), Lucha Corpi (1980), Celestino Gorostiza (1970) and others who want to recast Malinche as a woman of uncommon bravery, cunning, and possessing survival skills in an era of cataclysmic and catastrophic historical changes for Native Mexicans. Undoubtedly, some of Malinche's actions, as recounted in history, arouse negative sentiments from descendant nations of that period. For example, Malinche's skills in extracting information, from the wife of a cacique in Cholula, about a plot to kill the Spaniards, saved her Spanish masters even if it led to the murder of hundreds of the inhabitants of Cholula by the Spaniards (Gugliotta, 1989: 15).Also, her negotiating skills enabled her to persuade the rightly suspicious and wisely reluctant Montezuma to finally cave into Córtez's rapacious guile (Gugliotta, 1989: 20-21).These ostensibly traitorous maneuvers provide the scaffolding on which Octavio Paz hangs his theory of blame for the Mexican male's solitudes and self-deprecation. They see Malinche as their Eve who betrayed her country (Paz, 1985: 86), and thus their lamentation: "Puta, chingada, cabrona, India de miedra, hija de tu mala madre, maldita Malinche," who opened up her country to foreigners by opening "her legs to the whole conquering Spaniards" (Mojica, 1991: 24). I affirm that Mojica's play contests and rejects this vilification of a foremother by revisioning the historical causes that in the first place put Malinche and other Indian women at the mercy of the Spaniards.

Historical documentation shows that Native American girls were often given as gift objects of good intention to European conquistadores by the local caciques. Malinche's position was therefore not singular, even if her later role as a daring woman was more spectacular. Hence, when Mojica makes Malinche proclaim that "anything alive here is alive because I stayed alive!" it should be seen from the angle of recuperative poetics (Mojica, 1991: 25). Malinche's role in the play is a dramatization of Adriene Rich's call for women writers to revision women's problematic "relationship to the past" not only because "in the written records we can barely find ourselves" (1985: 84), but also because when those selves are included, they are often distorted. Thus, Malinche's assertion, "They say it was me betrayed my people. It was they betrayed me!" (Mojica, 1991: 22, 24) is closer to the truth than is often perceived by her detractors.

This problematic relationship, which Rich (1985) terms this "Great Silence," compels women, and especially Mestizas of the Americas, to choose between either "anatomizing our oppression, detailing the laws and sanctions ranged against us; [or] ... searching out those women who broke through the silence, who, though often penalized, misconstrued, ... still embodied strength, daring, self-determination; ... in short, exemplary" (Rich, 1985: 84). She

postulates that this desire for female subjectivity through the recuperation of female heroines underlies the "search for a tradition of female power," to validate the past and justify a future in which women's roles are not negated by a warped social system that denies women's potentials (Rich, 1985: 85).

Re-vision, Rich postulates, is the "act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction" (Rich, 1996: 1982). But re-visionary writing by Native American women transcends mere theoretical and casual re-interpretations of "cultural histories" to an unraveling of the "assumptions in which [they] are drenched," and enters into a "radical" and "feminist" reappraisal of literature for clues "to how [they] live, how [they] have been living, how [they] have been led to imagine [themselves], how language[s] [of European conquistadores] [have] trapped [them] ... how the very act of naming has been till now a male and [Eurocentric] prerogative, and how [Native American women] can begin to see, and name—and therefore live—afresh" and progress to self-knowing, and new identity reformation (Rich, 1996: 1982). Re-vision in this case encapsulates notions of narrative transfigurations and transformations. Hence, Ana Castillo affirms that "as women and as Native people, we must reconstruct our history with what is left unsaid and not with what has been by those who have imposed their authority on us" (1995: 111). On the one hand, re-vision enables Mojica to purchase agency "on the female side of life" (Tobias. 1982: 9), and to identify "with previous generations of Native women ... as part of a process of cultural recovery, and where issues of betrayal, anger, and complicity are also addressed" (Kelly, 1991: 119), to "bare the lies perpetuated against Native women ... with laughter *and* anger—a potent combination in the hands of a Native woman" (Brant, 1994: 15). On the other hand, Kelly warns that women of Native American descent, who engage re-visionary writing need to guard against their own "provisional identification with constructs of class, national boundaries ... and gender" (1991: 119). Likewise, they must recognize how these identifications are "constantly disrupted and challenged by the fluidity of other subjectivities and by assertions of difference" (Kelly, 1991: 119) in projects of cultural reclamations.

In *Princess*, re-vision becomes cultural reclamation, which is enacted in the libation of corn. Through the corn libation, Mojica initiates a ritual clearing in which she transcends the present and moves into the future through the invocation of the icon of past female behavior: Malinche. The ceremony gives moral and cultural grounding to Malinche's claim to veneration by celebrating the trans-formative and trans-figurative power of her womanhood and motherhood in her menstrual blood, which bleeds "into this piece of earth where I grow, mix with volcanic ash and produce fertile soil" (Mojica, 1991: 25). Volcano generates the white ashes of death, which becomes the black soil of fertility. Volcano is a metaphor of the unvoiced creative anger that Brant discusses in relation to Native American female writing (1994: 15). This repressed but volatile emotional energy, which Rich imputes is necessary for women's voice articulation (1996: 1992), becomes the vehicle for Malinche's

eruption into voice. Hence, trans-figuratively, Malinche as volcano is also shaman, mother, and the agent of economic, cultural, and social, and political reconfigurations, and racial preservation through cultural and racial symbiotic transformation in biological miscegenation (Brant, 1994: 88-9). Thus, as Cypress (1991: 126-127) states, Malinche cannot be fairly judged if her love for Cortéz is misconstrued as a betrayal of her "race through sex and sexual politics" (Moraga, 1983: 95). Corollary, Malinche's assertion, I am "born from the earth, fed my blood, anything alive here is alive because I stayed alive!" (Mojica, 1991: 25), is a radical rejection of the questionable association of her historical role with the paradigm of betrayal. Rather, she insists, that her role needs to be seen as life-giving, which corresponds to divine ordinance and her sex: "Of my membranes muscle blood and bone I / birthed a continent /—because I thought— / and creation came to be" (Mojica, 1991: 36).

Malinche's claims are consolidated and ritualized through a staged act of birthing (Mojica, 1991: 20). Biological conception and birthing underpin women's claim as partners with the Creator Spirit in the eternal cycle of human continuity. These qualities in women consolidate the centrality of women in human society which is accentuated through psychosomatic bonding between mothers and daughters down generations. It, moreover, initiates the formulation of the motif of Native American female critical self-recreation from the "scattered pieces ... the voices of despair" in order to "dream new visions to bring hope for the future" (LaRoque,1991: xxvii). The staged process of birthing thus refracts hope in situations of despair, and engenders the creation of multidirectional new paths (*Princess* 22) and footprints on the sands of life (*Princess* 35), in place of those erased by conquistador history and socioeconomic and political re-alliances (19). Birthing as a mode of continuity and bonding provides the theoretical and social foundations on which Mojica subsequently moves through the loopholes and biases of that history to conjure the ghost of Malinche. Mojica's style here recalls Carlos Fuentes *Todos los gatos son pardos* [All the cats are grey] (1970). Like Fuentes, Mojica engages the metaphor of birthing to articulate the new sociopolitical structure that reveals a world of a bloody synthesis rather than a world of blood differentiations. Mojica (1991) sees birthing then probably as Gorostiza and Fuentes see it, as a verbal construct that challenges the patriarchal worlds of both the Spaniards and the Aztecs, not as a somatic presence.

The concept of partnership with the Creatrix Spirit encourages Mojica in Transformation 7 of *Princess* (Mojica, 1991: 35-38) to conflate Malinche's indeterminate identity with that of Deity/Woman of the Puna/Virgin. This dramatic representation of female unpredictability and unmanageability challenges ordered Mexican and Chicano patriarchal narratives of identity reformulation. In contrast to these ordered histories, which seek to domesticate, desexualize, or over-sexualize Malinche, Malinche as Deity establishes situational uncertainties. She claims that no one is sure if she, out of her own volition ran to the "Spanish miner/Portuguese sailor-man (or maybe it was the other way

round)?" (Mojica, 1991: 36). Often disengaged from any suggestions that she could have been a free sexual being, the mother to all, rebel, creator, destroyer, and a warrior goddess of Mesoamerican cultures, who is "married to none / but the sun himself / or maybe the Lord of the underworld" (Mojica, 1991: 35), hence, Malinche becomes anatomized as a sexless, blanched, and nameless virgin of the Spanish conquistadores. When Malinche as Deity is transmogrified into a virginal alabaster asexual being, her procreative and liberatory sexuality, honored by the Aztecs, become deregulated and demonized by the Spaniards. The sexually unpredictable Deity is now removed from her Native male companion deities such as the Aztec gods, Toteotsi, and Tlakatekolot (Sandstrom, 1982: 31), and is then containable as the virgin mother worthy of Christian veneration.

Echoing Fuentes' *Todos los gatos son pardos*, Malinche's repeated cries, "Malinche ... Malinche? MALINCHE" (Mojica, 1991: 22) comes on stage to represent herself in her symbolic role. In making Malinche represent herself, Mojica's play resembles López's *Malinche Show,* which Cypress reads as a reversal of the "stylistic process of tropism, and in that way ... shows the metaphor made literal" (1991: 129). In this process Malinche is, therefore, projected as "an active, assertive, and mature woman, with a plan of action, the word as well as woman" (Cypress, 1991: 118). The invocation into personhood is an epiphanic moment of reconstructive engagement with history. Her scream stirs the silent spaces inside patriarchal historical templates and raises up those submerged textualities that are supervised by Native culture heroes such as Coyote and Grandmother Spider. Malinche, like the Coyote, challenges her representation as a passive victim in historical narratives. Malinche "spins thread out of her own body" (Rich, 1985: 101), and like Grandmother Spider "spins the thread of stories" out of herself in order to be "reborn into flight" (Mojica, 1991: 35). Malinche defines herself as slave, rebel, and a mother. As rebel, Malinche is wilful, free, creative, insightful, and visionary. As slave she must do what her captors demand of her—translate. As woman/mother, her reproductive organs provide a somatic space in which the drama of biological, cultural, and linguistic miscegenate between the Native Mexicans and Spaniards is staged. Malinche's role, therefore, is no betrayal of her people nor a whoring with the Spaniards, but a visionary and an unavoidably radical response to a new and difficult situation.

It is in this complicated interstices of history that Malinche defends her relationship with Cortéz (Mojica, 1991: 22-24). She recognizes her subservient location as a woman in her Aztec culture. Nonetheless, she is smart enough to utilize every opportunity to rise to prominence: "She must have extracted every nuance from the many sessions of interpreting and taken every opportunity of making Cortéz notice her outstanding achievements and beauty" (Gugliotta, 1989: 9). As an interpreter, a role that assigns to her, a woman, the power of speech and thus sets her apart from the traditional role of her sex, she is motivated to develop beyond mere servitude. Subsequently, her success lies in

her linguistic versatility, the power to translate and change meanings through semantic restructuring. She uses her skills to the benefit both herself and her involuntary Spanish overlords, and occasionally the Aztecs (Mojica, 1991: 23). She becomes the cultural translator and transformer between the Spaniards and the Aztecs.

According to Diaz del Castillo, Malinche was born of royal parentage, but sold into slavery or smuggled out of the community by her own mother when her father died, to avoid a problem of inheritance or harassment by her new husband. She is then given as a slave to Cortéz, who after using her sexually, and also as his interpreter, passes her onto his lieutenant with whom she had the first mestizos (1963: 86). Arguably, therefore, Malinche's rejection of the negative history which says she "opened [her] legs to the whole conquering Spanish army" (Mojica, 1991: 24) is justifiable. She insists that the Spaniards were already in Mexico as testified by the fact that she herself was a gift to them, a trophy, an abandoned gem looted by the Spanish conquistadores.

Malinche's self representation flies in the face of Octavio Paz's interpretation of how Mexican males see her role in their cultural, racial, and political mythologies. Malinche, according to this view, voluntarily submits to Cortéz as both mistress and interpreter, thus allowing her sexuality to be violated, and resulting in the birth of the Mestizos, who refer to themselves lamentably as "hijos de La Chingada" (1961: 65-88). Subsequently, Paz argues that Malinche's violation by Cortéz means the violation of Mesoamerica by the Spanish conquistadores (Paz, 1961: 86-7). He then postulates that this pre-conquest violation of Malinche is the root cause of the Mexican male's solitudes. Paz's zeal in apportioning blame through partial representation, leads him subsequently to ascribe abject passivity to Malinche, basing his argument on her sexuality. For instance, while Paz, on the one hand, praises the Europeanized Xochiqueztal or Tonantzin, christened variously La Virgen Morena, as the Virgin of Guadalupe in these words: "Guadalupe is pure receptivity, and the benefits she bestows are of the same order: she consoles, quiets, dries tears, calms passions" (1961: 85), he uncritically, on the other hand, lambasts Malinche as La Chingada. Paz insists that as La Chingada, Malinche "does not resist violence, but is an inert heap of bones, blood and dust. Her taint is constitutional and resides, as we said earlier, in her sex. This passivity, open to the outside world, causes her to lose her identity; she is the Chingada. She loses her name ... she is Nothingness. And yet she is the cruel incarnation of the feminine principle" (Paz, 1961: 85-6). Paz in these words, fails to acknowledge and interrogate the rapacious force and guile with which the Spaniards entered into the womb space of the Amerindians, and the duplicitous nature of some Aztec caciques.

But Gloria Anzaldua has contested that the situation of the "mental nepantilism, an Aztec word meaning torn between ways" (1997: 561) suffered by Mexican males cannot be blamed on the act of one woman, Malinche. Realistically, asks Lucero-Trujillo, how could Malinche, this one woman

without rights in her own community, have stood "in the way of European expansion; one woman could not impede the alliance of native class interests with the foreign invaders economic interests" (1997: 623). Indeed, as Mojica's play postulates, male Mexicans need to realize that Malinche's actions were designed to "holding the net / keeping the balance" to prevent total racial annihilation (Mojica, 1991: 23). Moreover, in rejecting Malinche, the men also reject the evidence of their Native identity manifested in the Mestizo's broad face, "eyes set wide apart? Black hair? Your wide square feet? Or the blue spot you wear on your butt when you're born?" (Mojica, 1991: 23).

However, much as Mojica's (1991) play rejects Paz's claims above, it nonetheless, to some degree, agrees with him that any repudiation of Malinche, becomes an abstract corollary repudiation of the white father—Cortéz. Similarly, Emma Pérez conjectures that such an abstract repudiation entails a psycho-emotional denial of the Native mother's proactive, individuated, and positive roles, while contradictorily blaming her for the Mexican male's solitudes (1993: 53-6). Subsequently, Pérez sees this state of abstraction as a result of a negative obsession with presumed phallocratic power, which makes Mexican and Chicano males suffer from castration anxiety (1993: 54). Hence, Pérez concludes that Paz's reduction of Malinche to a passive pack of dead bones, furthers the continuing misogynist negation of Malinche's positive role in Mexican history. Interestingly, Ana Castillo has revealed that in spite of all this, the most "provocative and significant" (1995: 166) development about Chicano discourse is the way in which the "figure of Malintzin/Doña Marina/ La Malinche, traditionally seen as a symbol of betrayal of the indigenous race" (1995: 166), becomes recuperated by Chicana feminists of all colors. Accordingly, Castillo contends that these writers see Malinche as the "slave victim, heroine, ... [a] genius linguist and military strategist. By viewing her this way with compassion, we have attempted to clarify how the patriarchal conquest ultimately left the young Mexican Amerindian woman little choice but to obey in the name of God the Father" (1995: 166-7).

As it often happens in historical narratives, which are constructed within the rubrics of patriarchal discourses, the political, social, and the cultural narratives of the conquered people get distorted and reconstructed to fit the master narratives of the conquistador. Thus, just as history has distorted Malinche's role, it has also aligned that role as the mother of mestizos with a reconstructed Xochiqueztal or Tonantzin (goddesses of fertility) as either La Llorona or La Virgen del Carmen, La Virgen Morena, or the Dark Vigin of Guadalupe (Lucero-Trujillo, 1997: 622). Eurocentric patriarchal interpretation of Aztec mythology transfigures Xochiqueztal, the willful goddess, who is said to have "drowned her own children to go off with a lover, and was then cursed by God to search for them throughout eternity" (Castillo, 1995: 109), into La Llorona, or the sorrowful mother (Mojica, 1991: 25). But unlike the folkloric narrative that has Xochiqueztal sorrowfully and repentantly wailing by rivers and lakes, Mojica's "Llorona's wail scream[s] across the desert. / Lost in

the rain forest you remember?" (1991: 25). If water is the abode of those who die violent deaths, while it also symbolizes locations of regeneration and new life formation, the desert signifies the mental barrenness of patriarchal discourse. This barrenness stigmatizes La Llorona while failing to understand the stifling nature of her domesticity that compels her to the drastic act of infanticide as a mode of resistance and personal liberation. However, Mojica's nationalist and feminist spirit gives her the courage to re-vision her as someone crying over the loss of her children because of the conquest and the complicity of the Aztec and Maya royals at the time. In Mojica's text, and contrary to Paz's interpretation then, it is not the disinherited sons, who are wailing and seeking the ideal mother, who has not been violated, and who is also still a virgin (1991: 83), but rather the courageous and good mother crying for her voice to be heard by her ungrateful sons.

But the idea of being the abandoned children of Malinche drives some Mexicans to look for an alternative mother figure in the figure of the Virgin (Mojica, 1991: 25), "la Virgen Morena," La Virgen de Guadalupe or Guadalupe-Tonantzin, in whom the Aztec goddess of fertility, Tonantzin, and the Catholic Virgin Mary converge, and get transfigured into a spiritual mother for the people. In reclaiming the La Malinche theme for Native American recuperation, Mojica identifies with those Lucero-Trujillo defines as people in a "quest for identity and affirmation that brown is beautiful (1997: 621). This proclamation underscores a search for spiritual suffrage and refuge "in the image of the indigenous mother" (Lucero-Trujillo, 1997: 621), who to some is Mother Earth, or la Virgen Morena, or La Virgen de Guadalupe, or Tonantzin, or Grandmother Spider.

Mojica combines the history of resistance to Christian evangelization mounted by the Women of the Puna, who for protection fled to the mountains where the goddess of fertility Tonantzin was worshiped. In order to complete the conquest of the Native people, the Spaniards renamed Tonantzin the Virgin Mary. It could also have been that, the Native converts, still desirous of maintaining their cultural and spiritual beliefs, adopted a syncretic mode of approaching Christianity, and therefore, renamed Tonantzin. According to Castillo, the transformation of Tonantzin into the Virgin of Guadalupe originated with Juan Diego's vision. Diego, a new convert to Roman Catholicism, and still struggling to come to terms with the "trauma of social and political upheaval" caused by the conquest, has a vision of the Virgin Mary where Tonantzin is supposed to be (Castillo, 1995: 111). Thus, begins the usurpation of the role of Tonantzin by the cult of the Dark Virgin of Guadalupe. The cult of the Virgin implies devotion to an asexual goddess. It also engenders and facilitates the promotion of bodily self-negation by women, who see any signs of sexual desire as sinful and anathema to good motherhood. The process of de-sexualization starts with the separation from the self, which effectively destroys psychosomatic and moral balance in Native women. Subsequently, Malinche, as a born-again Europeanized virgin, must first be

"scrubbed clean," de-racialized and "made lighter, non threatening," and finally desensitized into an object "chaste barren" (Mojica, 1991: 37).

Through this process of colonized negation, Tonantzin, the Dark Goddess of vegetation and life is turned into a white goddess for the Spanish and their Native converts. In separating her from herself and cultural location, Tonantzin's link to the forces of her cosmos and nature become disarticulated and she becomes gynomorphozed into a "sexless, without fire / without pleasure / without power" Virgin (Mojica, 1991: 37). This was the fastest way to extricate the process of menstruation, fertility, and birth from the Aztec woman, and through that destroy the Aztec female sense of self. Unfortunately the Spaniards could not foresee the resilience of the people's culture, which now gives the blanched Tonantzin hope, hope that if only one child believes still in her existence, she would continue to be remembered (Mojica, 1991: 37).

Through a political, anthropological, ritual, and spiritual reenactment of the enigmatic Malinche in *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots*, Mojica reestablished Malinche, and extends the existing framework for further development of the ongoing positive discourse on Malinche. The political and philosophical conclusions couched in Spanish and English become the rallying call to Mestiza/Chicana to retrace their cultural roots through Malinche, whose vision and courage have created alternative paths through the slaughters and pillages of history to ensure the survival of their people. Mojica's re-vision of Malinche's story, shows her awareness that as a multicultural and multiracial person, her role as a Native writer demand of her to mediate the "principle between contesting social formations...." (Sequoya-Magdaleno, 1995: 91) in the same way that the reclaimed Malinche stood as an interpreter, a bridge, between her culture and the new European cultures. Much in the spirit of Malinche, Mojica becomes a historical interpreter. She draws upon the courage and vision of the former, and validates the claim of Indianness by Contemporary Woman #1 and #2 through Malinche. Through them, she makes the play engender and validate its own energy and ideology through the female principle of matrifocality as the decisive factor in Native American self-recuperation.

[1]The Spanish part of the title of my paper comes from the play. It is a traditional Cheyenne proverb which means "A nation is not conquered." This I blend with Arthur Solomon's (1994) statement that "it is time for the women to pick up their medicine." I combine these statements to show the matrifocal nature of Mojica's representation of Malinche, and by extension, to show the centrality of Native American women's roles in their search for racial healing and cultural recuperation after centuries of genocide.

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Anu Aneja

My Mother and I

I, for one, loved the long hot summers of Delhi. All the older people in the house complained about the heat, the power cuts, and the searing blasts of the *Loo* that cut through the skin as though it was paper, leaving it withered, dry and charred. But my mother's skin responded so gracefully to summer's cruelty, acquiring a most pleasant hue and a light musky fragrance in that unrelenting season, that I could not help waiting for the winter to glide into the brightness of April. When I placed my open palms against my mother's upper arm, the flesh always felt cool and moist against my own. In the afternoons when we lay down together for a nap, I would bury my nose in her elbow and breathe in the deep, sweet scent of her body.

At the beginning of every summer, my mother would unpack her cotton saris and send them out to the local *dhobi* to have them starched and ironed. Twice a day, she would wrap herself up in the crispness of a calico print of tiny flowers or leaves scattered generously on a white base. Within a couple of hours the hustle and bustle of her daily routine would leave the sari hanging limp and soft around the contours of her ample frame. Then I would amuse myself with her long *pallu*, hide my face within its whiteness, or spread it like a thin curtain between us and the rest of the world. Sometimes when she stood staring out of her bedroom window, and the pleats of her sari fell in soft, dark shadows to the floor, I would open up the folds one by one and in that hidden world, greet my only friends, miniature beings like elves and little *paris*, who had found shelter in the crevices of the pleats. A rather impressive number of little people lived inside Mummy's cotton saris, and I, being a lonesome child, was always sorry to see them put away into suitcases at the end of the summer in the dismal company of mothballs. Irritated by my games, my mother would pull me into bed after lunch, and I would snuggle up against her belly as she flung the *pallu*

over us like a loose white dreamtent.

Afternoon was my favourite part of the day for my older brother and sister would be at school, my father at work, and this would leave me and my mother to entertain each other. In the deep blue shade of the heavy drapes, when the old house grew dark and cool, my mother would lie down in bed next to me, patting me to sleep, while I begged her for a new story. Then, as her voice rose and fell in the darkness, I would clasp her hand tightly in mine and walk alongside proud and haughty Ranis and Rajas who regularly paraded the long corridors of their marble palaces, or peep into the Rajkumari's private quarters as she sneaked off unescorted on a dangerous mission, forgetting her favourite red *dupatta* at the window. Sometimes flying low over a green forest on a magic rug at the end of a story, or ferrying a boat back from the Island of Paris armed with a jewel bestowed on me by their queen, I would sigh sadly that this most beautiful tale was now over, and tell my mother that this was the best story I had heard in all my life. And then she would smile and stroke my face gently as both she and I drifted off into separate dreamworlds.

On days when my mother received news of a new part in a play, the afternoon hours would be thrumming with a silent excitement. When she rehearsed her lines, I became her enthralled audience and watched her eyes light up as she paced up and down the drawing room, throwing her voice about, gesticulating, smiling, frowning, drawn forth into life by a new and magical force which overwhelmed both of us. At times, when she wanted to reward me for being good, she would let me cue her with a word or a line at the appropriate moment. I felt really lucky on those days when I too had a part in Mummy's plays, but resented, at the same time, the sacrifice of storytime. It also made me feel out of sorts to see my mother so quickly disappear from before my eyes, and become some strange nurse, or schoolteacher, or drunk and sad prostitute, to whose ways, and mannerisms, and speech I must accustom myself. So it was always a relief when rehearsal was done and Mummy was once again just Mummy. At the end of the rehearsal she always looked at me questioningly and my sad, bewildered face must have somehow assured her that the performance had been moving.

I was most confused the day she decided to be not nurse or teacher or secretary, but Mother, for I thought Parts were things other than what one was in real life, and couldn't fathom why she needed to play herself. Not having much of a say in these matters, however, I settled down on the bed to watch her, ready to cry out "Mummy, Mummy" after the lines "Oh just look at these beautiful bangles" as she had instructed me to do. The scene she was rehearsing called for a narrow laned bazaar so we arranged the tables and chairs in the room to simulate small stalls and display stands behind which intangible vendors stood waiting with their wares. I followed her along with my eyes as she sauntered through the crowded market, tugging at the hand of an imaginary son, pulling him along as she chatted with this or that shopkeeper, or stopped to admire a purse or a bedspread. Rahul, her "son," seemed to me to be a model

child for I hadn't heard a peep out of him so far. Had I been in his place I knew I would have become quite restless by now, but he obviously seemed not to mind my mother's idle ramblings, her incessant and absorbed chatter.

Just when I was about to lose patience with the fictitious Rahul and the slow moving plot, my mother stopped at what I construed to be a booth at which trinkets of all kinds were being sold, and began to make inquiries about the colours and sizes of rings and bracelets. As she slipped various bangles on and off her smooth wrists, I perked up in anticipation of my cue, and hearing it uttered, dutifully screamed "Mummy, Mummy" in my most urgent voice. She spun around immediately and called out, "Rahul, Rahul, where are you?" I thought how silly she is being, he is right there, next to her, holding her hand, doesn't she remember? But she kept crying out his name in panic, running up and down the room, looking in every nook and cranny for the mysterious Rahul. So I shouted out my well-rehearsed line once more, to remind her of my presence, but she continued to search behind chairs and tables and in every corner of the imaginary bazaar, as if I was the only unreal thing in the room. And then it dawned on me. He was gone! His hand had slipped out of hers as she tried on the bangles and the crowd had swept him away. She looked everywhere but Rahul had disappeared! She had lost her dearest and youngest child!! She began to run around the room, wailing and crying, a distraught, possessed woman, screaming out his name, Rahul Rahul Rahul Rahul. I couldn't believe my eyes or my ears, couldn't imagine how any mother could be so careless as to let go of her dearest child's hand, and all because of some stupid glass bangles!! But it broke my heart to see her look so guilty and helpless and lost, and I wished she would find Rahul quickly. So once again I tried to get her attention with "Mummy, Mummy, Mummy" but she wouldn't look towards me, just went on and on weeping and sobbing and chasing an invisible Rahul in desperation. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't stop the tears from flowing down my cheeks, and cried long and hard with her during the entire performance, and couldn't control my sobs even afterwards, even when she took me in her arms saying baby, darling, love, I will never-ever-never-ever let go of your precious little hands, I will never lose you like that foolish mother in the play, no matter what, never, ever.

And so it went, contentment and sorrow walking arm in arm on either side of us through the long summer of that year. At the end of that season I was to begin school and had already started to dread the daily separation from my mother. Meanwhile, other changes had begun to occur around me. My father's work took him away on frequent long trips to distant countries, and Mummy joined a Ladies' Group that met every few days at someone's house to discuss "women's problems." The women in the group were different from the ones who lived on our street, for they did not look down or away when a man spoke to them, wore stylish clothes, and some of them smoked. My mother, at thirty-three, did not smoke in public, but had for some time, taken to blowing rebellious smoke circles into the afternoon air, when she and I were alone in the

house. I, of course, had given her my unconditional promise that I would not "tell" and bore the burden of our shared secret with pride on my young shoulders. She called me her sole and most trusted conspiratress, and although I did not know what conspiratress meant, I felt quite pleased to be the owner of such a complex word.

When she lit up her first cigarette of the day, I would wait for the familiar smell of the smoldering tobacco, mixed in with her body's summer scent, and the glow of the burning tip at the end of the long ivory holder held at a casual slant between her full and shapely lips. I pretended that the vanishing circles of smoke were ghostly beings from the nether world and would jump around and slice through them with a butter knife as my mother lay back in bed and contemplated. "Life" she would call it, when I asked her, or "Problems" when she was being a little more communicative. "Life" for me was not then a tangible thing that one could lay back and ponder about but "Problems" bothered me since I had begun to sense an imminent danger in the word. I had not much idea about the content of these problems, except that I sometimes saw them reflected in the frown on my father's brow, or the severity of his voice when he returned from work in the evenings. Still, mostly oblivious to the wrinkles of their lives, I let myself sink daily into the waves of heat the summer spread over us like sheets, and sank back my head next to my mother's on the pillow, an arm and a leg wrapped around her belly, and followed her gaze as we both looked askew at her expanding circles of desire.

By the end of the summer my mother had acquired a new friend whom she had met at one of the Ladies Group meetings, and she suddenly began to look cheerful again. Gita Auntie was a large, effusive woman, with a lavish sense of style. Unlike my mother who always wore cotton in the afternoons, and used perfume only on special occasions, Gita Auntie's copious body was always swathed in expensive French chiffon saris and the scent of fresh roses usually preceded her into the house. *Gulabo*, my mother used to tease her, and she would burst into an infectious laughter. She had a vibrant, attractive face, and her dark and smooth complexion was complemented by her large, bright eyes, a wide forehead and sensuous lips usually smothered in dazzling lipsticks, magenta or purple or a deep carmine. Her gleaming jet black and wavy hair was often swept up into an elegant bun at the nape of her neck, sometimes pierced through with silver pins at the ends of which hung bunches of tiny silver balls which made a pretty tinkling noise whenever she threw back her head to laugh.

Also unlike my mother who was given to having "moods," Gita Auntie was always vivacious, breathless and brimming with things to tell us about. When she entered the house, her animated voice would cut through and dispel our reflective, ponderous reveries with an immediacy that was new to both of us. At first she dropped by occasionally for lunch or tea, or a casual chat in the afternoon, and Mummy and she would light up their cigarettes in the drawing room, their conversation full of energy and verve, and interspersed generously with laughter. I missed storytime but it cheered me up to see my mother become

so lighthearted, so I resigned myself to resting my head in her lap and playing with my fictitious friends inside her *pallu*, or dressing and undressing my dolls while she and her friend talked on and on into the evening hours.

Gita Auntie wove together so many interesting stories about the lives of my dolls, and knew so many different ways to tie a *duppatta* around their waists, that at first I too looked forward to her visits. She showed me how to press between the pages of a notebook, the gold and silver foils that Cadbury's chocolates were covered in, and then scratch the page with my nails until the foil became smooth and stiff and glossy underneath, and as thin and delicate as the silver filigree on fresh *mithai*. Once she even stitched a most glamourous gown in gold lamé for Bella, queen of Europe.

Bella, being Queen of Dolls, was only expected to leave the glass cupboard that my mother and I had named *Shish Mahal*, about once or twice a month, for she did not enjoy too much the company of ordinary people. I sometimes felt she must feel rather lonely cooped up like that in her palace, but her white gown and lacy train had grown dusty in the cupboard, and I had been too lazy to make her a new dress. When Auntie discovered this fact, she immediately went to work on a new party gown for Bella, and soon the doll was completely transformed. She looked so elegant in her strapless gold evening gown, a sparkling tiara on her head made from a piece of wire and part of a broken brooch, and matching gold slippers that Auntie had fashioned out of Cadbury's gold foil, that both my mother and I welcomed this excuse to have a party in her honour, a big ball where she could show off her royal gold garments. Then I brought out my little teacups and saucers, and filled them with sugared water, and Mummy arranged all my other dolls on little tables and chairs around Bella. When we had all drank up the sweet brew, Bella bowed before Gita Auntie in gratitude.

Soon Gita Auntie became a daily presence in our lives, driving up after lunch in her long navy blue car, sheathed in summery French chiffons, smelling of roses, gushing with energy and gossip and affection. But just as I was beginning to get used to sharing my afternoons with her, my mother decided that it was no longer appropriate for me to spend so much time listening in on adult conversations. She began insisting that I leave them alone after lunch, and would say to me in a pleading voice to go take a nap so that she and Auntie could talk. I couldn't understand why talking had all of a sudden become such an important activity in my mother's life, for she and I had always found the most comfort when we were wrapped up in each other's silence. But I would give in sullenly and leave them alone to carry on their prized conversations undisturbed.

To make up for this sudden change in our daily routine, my mother used to come and lie down next to me for a few minutes after the heavy meal, and let me wrap my legs around her as in the days before Gita Auntie, my cheek lined up against the coolness of her upper arm, as she told me a story or sang to me in her deep husky voice. I tried my best to keep my heavy, drooping eyelids

from closing, so that I would not miss the end of the story, in which the brave Rajkumari finally finds the hidden treasure in the Jungle of Jinns, or the monkey jumps off the crocodile's back and makes it to the river bank just when the crocodile has decided to eat him up alive. But nowadays the stories often went unfinished, for before we got to the end, the doorbell would ring and the familiar scent of roses would waft into the room, to be followed by Gita Auntie's loud, cheerful voice calling out, "hello, hello is anybody home?" Then I would look up grudgingly and see her standing above us, with what looked to me like jealousy in her sparkling eyes, and she would bend down and kiss me on the cheek, and take my mother's hand out of mine and pull her up, saying enough, enough of this mushy-mushy business, and laugh and lead her away into the other room, while I stared at their receding figures in complete and utter helplessness. Soon they moved their afternoon smoke sessions into the guest room, where behind the security of locked doors, they would talk and laugh and cry to their hearts' content. When the door was finally opened, they would come out and greet me with bright, chirpy voices, but every once in a while, my mother's face would be tear-stained and Auntie would leave in a huff.

One day, lying wide-awake in my bed, I felt myself become sharply aware of the sounds of their growing intimacy, and my forced exclusion. Resentment sparked and quickened inside me as I listened to the murmur of their low voices, as I thought of this dark and luminous woman whose presence in our house had turned my life upside down. Unable to control myself any longer, I got up and paced the room and tried to think of the best excuse I could use to drag my mother out of the guestroom. Suddenly my eyes fell upon Queen Bella, resplendent in her new gold lamé gown. Transformed forever from palace recluse to party queen, her cool grey eyes, her imperturbable vanity, her glamourous hairdo, her gold slippers, all seemed to mock me from a distance. I felt enraged at myself for ever having allowed such a big change to occur, for ever having my favourite doll bow in gratitude before this woman who had taken away from me all that was precious. I jumped up, pulled the doll unceremoniously out of her glass palace, and with a rude tug at her gown, ripped it down the front. Gita Auntie, I had decided, could very well spend another afternoon repairing the damage! Meanwhile, my mother would be forced to comfort me at this time of dire catastrophe.

Pleased with myself for having come up with this perfect plan, I quickly walked down the corridor clutching the poor, disheveled doll in one hand, and a portion of her ripped gown in the other. Outside the guestroom, I paused before knocking, putting my ear to the door to gauge the mood within. But all I heard was silence. I knocked once, softly. There was no answer, not even an irritated grunt. So I knocked again, this time with some insistence, and waited. Again nothing. Perhaps they had both fallen asleep I thought in dismay. Just as I was about to try once more, I heard a shuffling of feet and my mother's voice, "Please Gita, I have to see what she wants, let go for a second." Then the door opened and my mother stood before me, her face flushed and excited, her calico

sari in disarray, her eyes veiling dangerous secrets behind a thin maternal resignation. I was about to hold the doll up but some new strangeness in her face made me look beyond her, at the large dark shape of Gita Auntie reclining on the red divan. Gita Auntie's luxurious wavy black hair was spread in disregard on the pillow, her shoulders were bare, and she had carelessly flung one end of her translucent purple chiffon sari over her naked and heavy bosom. A purple sari blouse lay forgotten on the floor. She looked far removed from the seamstress I was expecting her to become. Seeing me standing in the doorway, she turned her drowsy radiant face towards me and blew a perfect circle of smoke in my direction.

In response to my mother's questioning look, I quickly backed away from the door, hiding Bella behind me, and said in a subdued voice, it's nothing really, just had a really scary dream. Mummy bent down, gave me her customary hug, and said, what happened in the dream, sweetie? My mind suddenly went blank, and then I felt tired, very tired. Come on, she said, tell me quickly, so it will go away and no longer bother you. Behind her, Gita Auntie's body seemed to be changing shapes, twisting around, restless, impatient, serpentlike. I searched frantically for a horror story, a nightmare that I could relate to my mother in an instant, a dream so scary that it would put to shame and dispel all other nightmares, that would once and for all prove to her how scared and alone and abandoned I truly, truly was. And the first thing that came into my head was the story about Rahul, the lost boy, so I said, Rahul, it was about Rahul, do you remember him, the one who was lost in the bazaar one day? You were searching for him all over the place, remember, but he was really, really, really lost, and I was begging you to find him quickly, or you would never find him at all, do you remember? At that she laughed and said, yes of course I remember Rahul, and kissed me on the forehead cooing in my ear, but Rahul's only a boy in a play silly, and don't worry, we will find him one day, now go back to bed my pet, and try to get some sleep. Gita Auntie has had a very busy day, she added, so let her get some rest now. I glanced once more at Gita Auntie only to see her smile and wink at me knowingly. I felt my face tighten up as the tears rose into my eyes, but before either one of them could notice it, I turned, and walked quickly away. Behind me, I heard the familiar click of the door, followed by low voices and then Gita Auntie's unbridled laugh. Trying to rid my mind of the image of the dark woman on the divan, I rushed back to my room, placed Bella back in her glass palace, and climbed into bed. Then, turning towards the wall, I wiped the tears streaming down my cheeks and hugged the cool empty spot on the white pillow where my mother's head used to lie next to mine, and threw my leg over the space where her belly used to be.

Glossary

dhobi: washer-man, collects laundry from homes, and returns it washed and ironed

dupatta: long veil worn over the bosom, a part of the Punjabi salwaar-kameez or salwaar-kurta outfit; worn in many parts of India, especially the North

Gulabo: from "Gulab" or rose; sometimes used as a name for a colourful or enticing woman

Loo: extremely hot, dry tropical wind that blows over much of India in the summer

mithai: sweetmeats made mostly of milk and sugar, often decorated with a thin filigree of silver foil

pallu: the loose end of the sari that hangs over the shoulder

paris: fairies that live mostly in paradise

Shish Mahal: literally, glass palace

Book Reviews

The Mother's Guide to Sex: Enjoying Your Sexuality Through All Stages of Motherhood

Anne Semans and Cathy Winks
New York:Three Rivers, 2001

Reviewed by Batya Weinbaum

The jacket blurb describes *The Mother's Guide to Sex* as "a hip, no-holds barred guide to sex and motherhood." This book raises controversial topics such as why single moms are entitled to great sex, and how to get it; and ten good reasons to talk to your children about sex, and what to say. It is a good book to have in your office—if you teach women—for your pregnant students. *The Mother's Guide* reminds us: "Given that most of us were raised believing we shouldn't talk about sex, it's no wonder that we find it a daunting task" (61).

This book leads you through the life-changing event of giving birth. A valuable chapter, "Sex and the Single Mom," explores topics such as what and when to tell your dates about your children. The authors advise, "most moms find that full disclosure helps them separate the wheat from the chaff when it comes to screening out unsuitable partners" (260); and "it's best not to let your lovers spend too much time with your kids until you've become more serious about your relationship" (252). Semans and Winks recognize that "until society prioritizes the needs of moms – including quality child care (subsidized and on

site), paid maternity and paternity leaves, job sharing, and family-friendly work environments, we're never going to have enough time. So our advice to you is to grab the moments you can for personal pleasure. And seize every possible opportunity to agitate for social change" (249-250).

Other chapters explore topics such as building self-esteem, becoming a mother, sexuality as a parent, and raising sexually healthy children. The list of parenting resources at the back of the book are invaluable – I wish I'd had them at my fingertips earlier. In fact, the lists contain many addresses, websites, and telephone numbers I will pass on to my students. The list of research organizations will provide the basis for essays and reports, and the list of hotline numbers listed will be useful for students, as well. In fact, this book will help raise the consciousness of all readers.

At the Breast: Ideologies of Breastfeeding and Motherhood in the Contemporary United States

Linda M. Blum
Boston: Beacon Press, 1999

Reviewed by Lara Foley

Linda Blum's book, as its subtitle suggests, provides a complex and nuanced portrait of ideologies of breastfeeding and motherhood in the United States. She analyzes nineteenth and twentieth century medical discourses, popular advice literature on motherhood and breastfeeding, as well as data from participant observation and interviews with 28 members and leaders of La Leche League. Further, in an effort to hear the stories of women who might be less influenced by dominant discourses, particularly working-class white and African-American mothers, Blum examines interview data from 34 women, recruited from an urban family practice clinic serving primarily low-income clients, as well as 19 women working as low-status hospital workers.

Blum situates motherhood and breastfeeding as both personal experience and public issue, developed in the context of power relations. She suggests that scholarship on motherhood historically has either privileged lived-experience or has constructed mothers as subjects of institutional and cultural discourses. Blum argues that a scholarly discussion of motherhood should encompass "women's stories, but framed knowledgeably, sympathetically in larger contexts; it is a view of women as active subjects but subject to particular constraints and conventions" (10). Her work does exactly that.

Blum gives an excellent overview of feminist theories on motherhood and

points out that this writing often ignores the physicality of mothering. She seeks to bring this perspective into view. As a related issue, Blum also examines the role of men in breastfeeding. In the introduction, she promises an extended discussion of men's claims to female bodies and sexuality in relation to breastfeeding. In the substantive, empirical chapters, however, the focus seems to be on men's presence or absence and their level of financial, emotional, and practical support, with far less discussion of their claims to women's bodies and sexuality.

A central theme of this work is that the notion of intensive, exclusive mothering has been embedded in medical discourse, "expert advice," and that y and has always been a "*white* status—and class—enhancing project" (9). In chapter two, Blum argues that nineteenth century maternalist reform efforts, expert advice on motherhood, and policy issues related to motherhood set the stage for contemporary social movements and the formation of La Leche League in 1965. Chapter three examines the ideology and practices of La Leche League and the middle-class, white mothers who are members of this organization. Chapters four and five address the meanings attached to breastfeeding by white, working-class and African American, working-class mothers, respectively, as well as the breastfeeding decisions and practices of these women.

I assigned this text in a women's studies course entitled "Theories and Politics of Motherhood." The students responded positively, offering only one criticism: "What about middle-class, African American women?" I echo this critique. The author's explanation for this absence is that La Leche League, where the middle-class respondents were found, is a white, middle-class organization. This explanation does little to satisfy the reader.I enjoyed this book and have recommended it to sociology and women's studies scholars and students, as well as to women's health care professionals interested in breastfeeding. I would recommend this text for courses on motherhood and for courses on qualitative methods: it is a stellar example of interdisciplinary research methods.

Waiting in the Wings: Portrait of a Queer Motherhood

Cherrie Moraga
Ithaca: Firebrand, 1997

Reviewed by Colette Morrow

Cherrie Moraga's *Waiting in the Wings: Portrait of a Queer Motherhood* is an

extended meditation on *Lesbiana* — Chicana lesbian — motherhood. It takes the form of a journal supplemented with commentaries, written retrospectively, on the original entries. The journal begins when Moraga becomes pregnant, continues with an account of her premature son's health problems, and ends when he is three years old.

Themes present in Moraga's previous works reappear and converge in this book. As in her earlier writings, Moraga explores her desire for a child, the performance and meaning of lesbian sexual and emotional intimacy, and the nature of kinship in Mexican-American cultures. In *Waiting in the Wings*, she examines these themes from the new perspective of *Lesbiana* motherhood. Characteristically, Moraga infuses the book with mysticism and Chicana nationalism, brought into focus here through the figure of her son, Rafael.

The prologue opens by proclaiming the biological impossibility of same-sex reproduction: "Our blood doesn't mix with . . . with an equal split of DNA" (15). Moraga subsequently questions why lesbians and gays – who lack the ability to reproduce with each other — wish to incorporate children in their families. Her answers range from personal to socio-cultural explanations. Most compelling is her suggestion that woman-centered *lesbiana familia* is a revision of "something Mexican and familial ... without all the cultural constraints." Generative, *lesbiana familia* offers authenticity and healing in a world fraught with racism, sexism, homophobia, and abuse. It is an antidote to the death of the human spirit caused by oppression.

Although Moraga's ideology of *lesbiana familia* is specifically lesbian and Chicana, the pathos of her self-portrait will evoke empathy. Passages chronicling Rafael's premature birth and his health crises in the intensive care nursery are particularly moving. By juxtaposing heart-wrenching descriptions of Rafael's medical procedures with brutally honest self-examination, Moraga vividly reconstructs and shares her anger, fear, and guilt. Many readers also will empathize with Moraga's exhaustion as she attempts to balance parental and other responsibilities and reveals the toll this takes on her relationship with her partner, Ella.

Although much of *Waiting in the Wings* concerns common parental experiences, it remains a story about a *Lesbiana* mother and her child. Readers frequently are reminded that lesbian mothers continue to encounter personal and institutional homophobia. Readers also are introduced to the emotional complications surrounding insemination.

The book expresses Chicana literature's traditional concerns and themes. The role that spirituality and religion — Mexican Catholicism and indigenous beliefs — play in subject constitution and cultural formation are reworked through Moraga's need for faith in crisis and as she contemplates the "*mexicanismo*" that Rafael inherits. Finally, the Chicana assertion that *familia* is at once empowering and oppressive is reflected in Moraga's claim that there is a symbiotic connection between Rafael's birth and the deaths of two relatives. The final lines of the book brilliantly capture this sentiment: "Rafael . . . is a

messenger of death, not in the negative sense of the word, but in that he brings the news of the cruel and sudden miracle of the cycle of our lives" (127).

Waiting in the Wings is superbly written, a work that maintains and develops Chicana literary conventions in unexpected and thrilling ways that can be appreciated by a general audience.

My Lesbian Husband: Landscapes of a Marriage

Barrie Jean Borich
St Paul: Graywolf Press, 1999

Reviewed by Elisabeth Speller

My Lesbian Husband is part memoir, part cultural exploration, and part love story, conceived as creative non-fiction. Here, Barrie Jean Borich explores the ways that words and actions inform and reform one another. She poses the question "Are we married?"—"we" being herself (a recovered alcoholic femme lesbian) and her butch lover of twelve years, the eponymous husband, Linnea. These two women are firmly set in the various milieux of their lives: their neighbourhood, their different families, and their various friends, both hetero-sexual and gay-lesbian-transgender-queer.

Throughout the book, it is as if we are eavesdropping on the innermost thoughts of the author as she examines the cultural institution of marriage. In attempting to define what it is that holds her own relationship together, she explores myriad other relationships: mothers and their offspring (as children and adults), brothers and sisters, straight marriages, lesbian and gay male relationships, and friendships. She draws on her own experiences as daughter, sister, sister-in-law, niece, aunt, lover, and friend, as well as her observations of family members. By foregrounding cultural identity – Eastern European and Japanese in her own case, Italian in Linnea's, and the many and varied identities throughout her neighbourhood – issues of race, ethnicity, and multiculturalism are raised.

In addition, Borich provides a plotted and eminently readable account of the many nuances of lesbian politics in the United States during the second half of the twentieth century. She illuminates such aspects of lesbian culture as butch/femme, feminist politics, race, class, sexuality, alcohol and drug use, and non-monogamy.

The book is full of contradictions and ambivalence, however. The reader

is never certain that Borich *wants* to be married, even when she and Linnea get married in a kitsch Las Vegas wedding ceremony officiated by a lesbian minister. We never really know whether she wants to fit in with the straight world of heterosexual couples or the seemingly subversive world exemplified by her quirky friends and neighbours, or does she flourish by being altogether different.

We do learn that the bonds that hold two people together can be as firm and strong as they are invisible. We are shown, however, that such bonds do not develop easily. This memoir/cultural exploration/love story, written with tenderness and toughness, utilizes a breathtaking range of sustained metaphors. As a poet, Borich brings a deft touch to this exploration of two people embedded in communities that can sustain, and also challenge, their members.

Halving It All: How Equally Shared Parenting Works

Francine M. Deutsch
Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999

Reviewed by Merryl Hammond

Do not be fooled by the clever title. *Halving It All* is a Harvard University Press publication: heavily footnoted, referenced, and indexed, it includes 11 chapters with such titles as "Creating Equality at Home," "Career Detours," "The Mother and Mr. Mom," and "Equality Works." It is not an easy book to read. Author Francine Deutsch tries to put human faces on complex family arrangements—"Steve and Beth stood in their kitchen discussing how they were going to manage the afternoon care of their four-year-old"—which is helpful. But several chapters later, when she again refers to Steve and Beth's arrangements and their methods of negotiating, I could not recall their particular case, having since encountered so many other couples and their childcare arrangements. Nevertheless, Deutsch explodes many commonly-held myths about parenting and occasionally offers succinct, gem-like flashes of insight.

Examples of such gems include the following: "Daycare is the crucible on which ideals of equality are often destroyed" (159); "People change" (216); and "Couples create equality by the accumulation of large and small decisions and acts that make up their everyday lives as parents" (230). Deutsch also quotes the individuals she interviewed for her study: "We're more equals. It's more like I'm his wife, not his slave" (181); and "You can't raise children by spectating" (216).

Some of the couples are "equal sharers" who divide the responsibilities of parenting. Within this category, there are many variations on the "size of the parenting pie to be divided" (33). Childcare, for example, can be provided by parents, as well as substitute caregivers. Some families undertake joint parenting, spending time together as a family, while others prefer "tag-team parenting," leaving one parent in charge while the other takes a break.

In unequal families, Deutsch finds that fathers function either as helpers, sharers, or slackers (45). The "helper" father leaves planning, organizing, and worrying to his spouse and helps out when asked or told to do something. The "sharer" father takes equal emotional responsibility for his children but spends less time parenting than his spouse. And the "slacker" father makes one's blood boil. He is the man who returns from work, slumps in a chair, and asks, "Why isn't supper ready yet?" When challenged, he justifies himself: "Cooking relaxes her" or "She can never sit still" (62). Deutsch analyzes male power and privilege and gives examples of the "stunning array of indirect strategies" (62) that many men use to resist parental work and responsibility: passive resistance, strategic incompetence, strategic use of praise, adherence to inferior standards, and denial (74-78). The reader meets "proprietary mothers" and the "discouraged" or "disconnected" fathers with whom they live (111), as well as many "maternal," "non-traditional," or "hands-on" fathers (218).

Over time, however, couples can change and equality can be established within any family, if a woman believes in and insists upon equally shared parenting: "Gendered choices at one moment in time do not preclude gender-resisting choices at another. It's never too late to edit that video" (151). Deutsch stresses that "equally sharing women feel entitled to equality" (61). Such women compare their spouses' contributions to their own, while women in unequal families compare their spouses' contributions to those of other men, many of whom are "slacker" fathers.

Once the principle of equality in parenting is accepted by a woman, the day-to-day details of childcare need to be negotiated – and constantly renegotiated. In many families, however, this is not easy: "We wake up in the morning and yell at each other about who is going to take what responsibility for what on any given day," says one equally sharing father (64). Perhaps Deutsch needs one additional category: the reluctant equal sharer! In fact, for many of the mothers and fathers in this book parenting seems to be an unpleasant chore to be performed as efficiently as possible, so that each parent can go on to pursue their true interests, unencumbered by children. As a feminist and a stay-at-home mother, I asked myself throughout my reading: Where is the love, commitment, and connection among parents and their children? Will equally shared parenting so alter the nature of parenting that children will end up, not with the ideal attachment to two parents, but with no attachment at all to parents? "Equality works" (236) Deutsch claims, and her study shows that it does for many parents. But someone must study the long-term effects of equally shared parenting on children.

Special Delivery: Mother-Daughter Letters from Afar

Joyce Slayton Mitchell and Elizabeth Dix Mitchell
Culver City, CA: EquiLibrium Press, 1999

Reviewed by Ruth Nemzoff and Rebecca Norman

Dear Becky,

I have just finished reading a disquieting book, *A Special Delivery: Mother-Daughter Letters from Afar*, by Joyce Slayton Mitchell and Elizabeth Dix Mitchell. The book contains correspondence between an American mother living in New York and her pregnant, unmarried daughter living in rural New Zealand.

As the women exchange news of their daily lives and the impending birth, they demonstrate the difficulties of intergenerational communication. The mother sends carefully crafted, self censored messages to her daughter. The daughter says what she will and the mother continues to send circumspect advice and counsel. Throughout my reading, I wondered what this seemingly accepting mother would say of her daughter to her best woman friend. In fact, in the only letter to a friend included in this collection, Joyce vents her frustration over her daughter's choices.

I found myself unsettled, thinking about the price both generations pay for independence. This book shows the fine line between expressing things tactfully and being silenced. I wonder what you will think of this book.

Love, Mom

Dear Mom,

I read the book you sent me before I read your letter. Boy, was I relieved to hear that you too had mixed feelings about the book!

While there is always a perverse pleasure in reading other people's mail, I found these letters to be superficial. Given their circumstances—living on opposite sides of the globe and expecting a new child—one would think these women would send one another letters wrought with emotion. Instead, they skim the surface of their lives, briefly summarize events, and do not provide an honest account of their feelings. I hope that when I was teaching in Italy last year you did not feel so divorced from my life.

I, too, found the mother's letters to be disquieting. Beneath the mother's carefully worded suggestions to get married and to give birth within driving distance of a hospital, a reader can easily sense disapproval. After a lifetime spent encouraging her daughter to be independent, her letters belie an inner struggle over where support ends and enabling begins. Their brief discussion of household finances (where Elizabeth snaps at her mother, reminding her

that she is 30 years old and capable of conservative spending) is the only time daughter and mother seem to be speaking to one another directly, rather than dithering over the details of daily life. Are most mothers so estranged from their daughters? While these thoughts can be teased out of the book, I wonder whether many readers will continue to the end.

Much love, Bec

The New Don't Blame Mother: Mending the Mother-Daughter Relationship

Paula J. Caplan
New York: Routledge, 2000

Reviewed by Gill Rye

The cover of *The New Don't Blame Mother* announces that "this book has the power to change your relationship with your mother or daughter." This is a self-help book, an updated and revised edition of Caplan's original bestseller first published in 1989. The author is a clinical research psychologist and, in popularizing her subject, she does not hesitate to blame therapists for contributing to the mother-blame that permeates society.

The second edition includes a preface that takes account of newly published material in the field. Here, Caplan also points to recent social changes, such as developments in reproductive technologies and new trends in parenting and family arrangements that impact on the ways mothers continue to be blamed in society. The discussion relates primarily to the United States and Canada (and due praise is given to the activities of ARM).

The thesis of the book rests on two assumptions: first, that most mother-daughter relationships are not merely ambivalent but frequently a source of great pain; and second, that one of the major causes of such difficulty is the extent to which society blames mothers for everything that is wrong with their children. In *The New Don't Blame Mother*, Caplan seeks to help mothers and daughters help themselves by learning from the experiences of others and by thinking positively. Social attitudes towards mothers are analyzed through the polarized myths of the Perfect Mother and the Bad Mother. The Perfect Mother is an unlimited, natural nurturer; the Bad Mother is, at once, the mother who stays home and the mother who has a paying job outside the home. Whether "perfect" or "bad," mothers are blamed for not conforming to stereotype.

Caplan writes social construction theory for a mass audience. Thus, blame is placed on society—which disadvantages women—not on mothers themselves. Caplan's point is that understanding the root of negative feelings helps us make positive changes in our relationships with our mothers, with our daughters, and with other people, especially since mother-daughter relations are felt to impact on all other relationships. She emphasizes "building bridges," "repairing the rift," and the value of communication. This self-help book argues for one important and laudable strategy: that women strive to humanize their mothers, since a mother is also a person, a woman in her own right.

Dutiful Daughters: Caring for Our Parents as They Grow Old

Jean Gould, ed.
Seal Press, 1999

Reviewed by Christine Peets

I had expected *Dutiful Daughters* to be a "how-to" book on caring for parents. What I found instead was a compelling collection of 22 essays not so much on the "mechanics" of caring for parents- arranging home care, nursing home care, and looking after finances- but the emotional rollercoaster of "doing it all."

In her introduction to the collection, editor Jean Gould shares her own experiences of caring for her own mother, first visiting a retirement home and then in her mother's apartment. For Gould, the world of eldercare is akin to travelling in a foreign country, without benefit of the knowledge of either custom or language. Although she writes about the United States, the experiences she described could be universal. As we age ourselves, we realize that our parents may reach the point of no longer being able to care for themselves. But they are the adults, and we are the children; therein lies the problem of giving care without taking over.

The essays explore many emotions, including those we do not always allow ourselves to express or, in some cases, even acknowledge. Mixed with one's love and respect for a parent is a melange of emotions: pride, remorse, guilt, anger, and anxiety. Strengths and weaknesses are discovered in both parents and children. Readers will feel empathy for, and perhaps identity with the writers in the volume, many of whom simply tell without telling us how they feel.

All of the essays are written by women; although, as Gould points out, this does not mean that sons do not care for aging parents. It is unfortunate that she

did not seek out essays by men. It would be interesting to learn if the emotional responses and experiences of men are similar to those of women who care for aging parents. That criticism aside, the collection shows the strengths and vulnerabilities of a diverse group of women who share their stories and describe the energy required to be in two lives, their own and their parents.

Reading these stories gives us permission to think what otherwise might have been unthinkable: that to truly be "dutiful" to our parents, we first have to be true to ourselves. This book should be read by daughters entering the foreign land of elder care, and by their brothers, husbands, and sons so we all can learn to care for our parents, in a way that maintains the dignity of everyone involved.

And the Skylark Sings With Me: Adventures in Home-Schooling and Community-Based Education

David H. Albert
Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 1999

Reviewed by Andrea Toepell

David Albert is a supporter of public education. But, as much as he likes the idea of universal education, he sought to educate his own two children to the best of his ability. He did not send them to public school. Instead, he created a home- and community-based educational environment for them. And, some ten years later, he is proud to show off the results. His daughters achieved enviable levels of mastery in many areas, especially music and science.

Albert is careful to demonstrate that his family is not genetically "loaded" with musical talent. He reasons that success is possible when children are allowed to blossom on their own terms, in their own time, in a culturally rich environment. Albert argues that most, if not all, children can attain high levels of achievement, given an appropriate level of support and guidance. Albert suggests that the public educational system cannot possibly provide the environment necessary for outstanding success. (The book refers to the American educational system, but it is likely applicable to the Canadian educational system as well.)

In order to provide the optimal developmental milieu for their children, the author and his wife made significant changes to their lives. They both left their careers and found employment that enabled them to devote their time and energy to raising and educating their children. It appears from the book that these new forms of employment were less rewarding—intellectually and

financially—than their previous endeavours.

Albert's educational philosophy is based on ideas developed initially by Jean Jacques Rousseau and imported into North American educational thinking by John Dewey. Rousseau argued that, given a proper environment, the "noble savage" in a child will blossom into a successful and accomplished person. He felt that formal schooling is detrimental to the blossoming process, and that one learns better by "doing" rather than studying. Apparently, Rousseau's concern for the welfare of children was more theoretical than practical: he abandoned all five of his own children to orphanages. Albert takes the opposite approach by sacrificing his entrepreneurial career for the sake of his children's development.

The book is well written and a pleasure to read. It includes a rich bibliography, complete with the author's annotations on many of the sources. Its language is sophisticated, clear, and succinct. For the reader who agrees with Albert and Rousseau's thinking, this book will prove satisfying. For the opponent, there is much "meat" in which to sink one's intellectual teeth.

Transformative Motherhood: On Giving and Getting in a ConsumerCulture

Linda L. Layne, ed.
New York: New York University Press, 1999

Reviewed by Jeanne-Marie Zeck

Transformative Motherhood, a collection of anthropological essays, is a valuable book for parents and educators. Linda Layne and her contributors present research on mothers and children who have been marginalized in American culture and, until recently, neglected by anthropologists. In this collection, the authors examine the experiences of adoptive mothers, birth mothers, and their children; surrogate mothers; foster mothers; and mothers of physically and mentally handicapped children. Layne herself presents research on women who have lost children through miscarriage, stillbirth, and death in infancy. What unites these essays is an examination of the rhetoric of gift giving and receiving. Each author analyzes how those in her particular research group use gift terminology to explain their experiences, to define themselves, and to grant full humanity to children who often are dismissed by a culture that focuses on physical "perfection."

Adrienne Rich's 1976 history of childbirth in America, *Of Woman Born*, was the first academic study to include a mother's personal account of care giving. In the tradition created by Rich, the anthropologists in Layne's book seamlessly incorporate their own experiences of mothering into their research.

This assertion of personal maternal experience as a form of expertise is a significant feminist claim. Throughout *Transformative Motherhood*, the authors build on one another's research and often present subtle similarities and differences. The result is a cohesive collection that reflects the contributors' mutual respect.

American consumer culture, these authors believe, frequently focuses on superficial physical perfection. Only a woman who manufactures a perfect product (a physically and mentally "perfect" child) is considered a real mother. In opposition to such social prejudices, the authors in this volume assert the profound spiritual value of the gifts and lessons mothers give and receive through their experiences as life givers and caretakers. As Gail Landsman notes in her essay, "Mothers of children with disabilities talk about reassessing values, realizing true priorities, putting things in perspective, and above all, being less judgmental of others. The child's gift of knowledge of unconditional love provides mothers a vocabulary with which to develop a critique of consumer culture " (159).

Mothers also use the rhetoric of gift giving to discuss their contributions to society. For example, Danielle F. Wozniak discusses the role of foster mothers: "Through transformative relationships with children, women healed a portion of their community and contributed to overall social reform. Through mothering work, women saw themselves as family makers, professional caregivers, and community healers" (89). Both researchers and mothers note that these gifts are deeply valuable and could, if understood by others, benefit and possibly transform American culture.

The essays in *Transformative Motherhood* are well written, engaging, and important. They will be especially helpful to parents who have been marginalized by mainstream American culture. This volume is suitable for women's studies courses and courses on motherhood and/or disabilities.

Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare and the State, 1890-1930

Molly Ladd-Taylor
Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994

Reviewed by Stephanie Chastain

Marshall McLuhan once said that the politics was the offering of "yesterday's answers in response to today's questions." It seems that what McLuhan failed to take into account was that today's questions are not very different from those

of yesterday. This is made clear in Molly Ladd-Taylor's *Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare and the State, 1890-1930.* This text reveals that contemporary questions about the role of women and the care of children are similar to questions posed since the latter part of the nineteenth century. One might conclude that our culture has been obstinately unoriginal in the way it addresses the persistent and repetitive questions about working women, and the role of government in fostering care for children.

Ladd-Taylor begins her history with the heartbreaking experience of infant death. She takes as the seed of her history this particular anguish, outlining the way in which infant death was a significant factor in the development of modern attitiudes toward working mothers. Due to the high infant mortality rate at the beginning of thr twentieth century, mothers looked desperately to the medical community for care and advice. As mothers turned away from traditional wisdom and remedies and relied more heavily on doctors and professionals for advice, they reinforced the growing power of the medical profession and facilitated the transfer of their expertise to the *new* experts.

Meticulously researched, Ladd-Taylor's history charts issues that concerned parent organizations and women's groups that organized to protect the interests of children and standardize childcare. She looks at the special interests of groups invested in improving social conditions. At the urging of the community, government involvement fostered the creation of social services and the intervention of service agencies precipitated the regulation of the care and protection of children.

If this sounds familiar, it should. Today's concern with the value or necessity of childcare, the fate of the working mother, and the involvement of government were serious concerns at the dawning of the industrial age, when Americans found that the self-contained family could no longer exist in isolation. Ladd-Taylor reminds us that looking to medicine and social services for protection of sick and deprived children did not then (nor does it now) address the causes of the problems themselves: poverty, deprivation, crowded living conditions. These social conditions were seen as crimes against society and, if the intervening child advocates did not blame mothers for these conditions, they often blamed themselves. Women's groups who formed on behalf of children sometimes contributed to the notion that mothers did not know what was best for their children. Was it not their desire to work outside the home sufficient proof of women's inattention to their children?

Ladd-Taylor calls attention to the racial biases that have come into play as women have increased their demands for work and child services. She shows how diverging interests and political agendas have turned on issues of race, poverty, and immigration and the way these issues have influenced the development of practical and productive policies to protect children and allow women to work. Black women are criticized for having too many children; the alienation of immigrant women is romanticized; white women are faulted for delaying childbirth in favour of work; and issues of poverty have always

connected and estranged all ethnicities. Marginalized cultures have additional childcare concerns: children must not only be healthy and safe but taught to survive in a racially divided world.

The care of children and the working mother continues to be a hot political topic and the right of women to work is still part of a large, conflicted political agenda. Working mothers continue to be viewed as pathologically neglectful both of their children and of their duty to society. Ladd-Taylor has documented the history of the relationship between working mothers and government. *Mother-Work* cautions that domestic and family issues have a serious and complex political history. They demand renewed and serious attention; they require solutions of tomorrow, not those of yesterday.

Trans Forming Families: Real Stories About Transgendered Loved Ones

Mary Boenke, ed.
Imperial Beach, California: Walter Trook Publishing,1999

Reviewed by Fiona Joy Green

Trans Forming Families was inspired by editor Mary Boenke's personal journey of coming to terms with and supporting her middle child's transition from female to male. This is a collection of narratives written by people living in England, Iran, the Netherlands, and North America about living with trans family members. For those new to this topic, a glossary of transgender terms, a list of American National Transgender Organizations (including web sites and email addresses), and a brief reading list of transgender works published between 1990 and 1997 are included at the back of the book.

Readers will be moved by the clearly written, honest stories in this modest 146-page book. I was touched by Boenke's opening dedication to her son and to transgendered persons and their families. I developed an appreciation for the close kinship within trans communities as I read the forward and introduction written by trans activists. Examples of the intense struggles and perseverance of family and friends are woven throughout the four sections of the book: raising gender-variant children; learning from our children of all ages; inventive love relationships; and crucial others.

Each story is prefaced with a brief, contextualizing biography of the author. I felt part of a sharing circle in which people speak openly about the trials of living with, loving, and supporting people who are unhappy in their bodies. While I do not have a story of my own, I live—as we all do—among transgendered people and, as my family grows and changes, I could find myself

sharing the experiences described in this book. I felt the pain of parents who write of helping their children through puberty in bodies they hate; I relearned the importance of listening to children; and I gained renewed respect for the courage and strength it takes for children to speak of what they know and need. As I read of the love people have for their trans partners, I reflected upon the meaning of my own gender, sex, and body and those of my partner's. I thought about my relationship with my spouse and wondered how I might respond to my partner, to other family members, or to their partners should they become transgendered.

While the accounts in this volume reveal the feelings of pain, anguish, and anxiety felt by people living in bodies that do not match their internal gender identity (gender dysphoria), they also reveal the feelings of individual family members. Many speak of feelings of shock, denial, isolation, anger, depression, and finally acceptance that are associated with the grieving process of losing a loved one. Linda Milligan adds a visual dimension to these feelings with four black and white paintings entitled "Healing Through Art."

This volume, however, is much more than a chronicle of the pain, hope, and joy of loving trans people. It is a much needed resource for families dealing with the difficulties associated with gender and sex transition. Support groups and counseling for all family members can help people adjust over time to their new realities. Being open and honest about transforming identities can assist others (including school authorities, peers, colleagues, and family members) to accept trans people.

Throughout my reading of *Trans Forming Families*, I was reminded of the need for social activists to build coalitions. I see how feminist and trans activists could work together around common issues (such as sex, gender, ability, size, reproduction, race, and sexuality) to strengthen their respective political bases and strategies. Collectively and/or individually, these communities could work against discrimination and the oppression of people according to biology and work towards achieving autonomy for all individuals.

Wake Up Little Susie: Single Pregnancy and Race before Roe v. Wade, Second ed.

Rickie Sollinger
New York: Routledge, 2000.

Reviewed by Bernice L. Hausman

Originally published in 1992, this second edition of *Wake Up Little Susie* has a

short forward by Elaine Tyler May and a new afterword by the author, and is a fascinating book about maternity, reproductive politics, and race in the United States. Sollinger demonstrates that particular social and historical circumstances configured policies directed toward single U.S. mothers during the twenty years after World War II. The policies and institutional practices that emerged in this period were race-specific, encouraging white single mothers to give up their babies for adoption and assuming that black single mothers and their offspring would be taken care of by family and community. Taken together, the policies and social ideologies suggest a profound change from prewar attitudes toward single pregnancy as evidence of inherited defect or moral deficiency. In the postwar period, white single women who became pregnant were assumed to be mentally ill; therapy, giving the baby up for adoption, and return to life as a single non-mother was required to rehabilitate these women into their rightful social place as virginal potential brides. Black single women, however, were thought to become pregnant because of their more animalistic, sexual instincts; punitive responses to black single pregnancy were linked to the notion that they could not be rehabilitated. Black single mothers were expected to keep their babies (as were all single mothers before WWII), but there were few social services available to them and those that were available were likely to be obtained at a high personal cost.

The chapters in the book discuss the largely segregated maternity homes of the period, the development of the "postwar adoption mandate" for white babies, psychological explanations for white single pregnancy, issues concerning welfare provisions for single mothers of both races, specific approaches to "black illegitimacy," and the effects of the "sexual revolution" on single pregnancy and women=s experiences. The racialization of single motherhood was based on four strategies: language "that distinguished white unmarried mothers and their newly commodified babies from their valueless African-American counterparts," "race-specific theories to explain why unwed mothers were not real mothers," "racially specific vehicles for redistributing illegitimate children," and "using the welfare system to publicly shame and financially punish unwed mothers of color and their children" (234). During the Reagan/Bush years, Sollinger argues, these strategies emerged again and even targeted middle-class women who "were portrayed as consumers with thoroughly commodified children" (239). She notes that at the end of the twentieth century (unlike at its midpoint) the government sought to be intimately involved in ending "unmarried pregnancy and childbearing" (242), as evidenced in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996 (the "welfare reform" of the Clinton administration).

In the end, Sollinger asks her readers to consider what white racism has to do with the fact that U.S. citizens allow themselves to believe that welfare expenditures for poor mothers take up 50 percent of the national budget (when in reality they take up four or five percent). It is impossible to read *Wake Up Little Susie* without understanding that racism as well as a deeply felt distrust

of women as mothers—magnified when the women are not formally subordinated to husbands—makes such odd national passions possible.

Islands of Women and Amazons: Representations and Realities

Batya Weinbaum
Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999

Reviewed by Gail M. Lindsay

In *Islands of Women and Amazons*, a reader looks over Batya Weinbaum's shoulder as she delves into history, literature, popular culture, folklore, and personal experience to inquire into the feminist meaning of myths and images of women. I imagine Weinbaum as an Amazon herself, in search of community and meaning in contemporary American society. Archetypal theory informs Weinbaum's study of the history, mythology, science fiction, culture, and anthropology of societies of women, often located on islands.

Weinbaum hypothesizes that Amazon archetypes are used in three ways: to reclaim women's lost power; to keep women within patriarchy and reverse the gains of the women's movement; or to build links between Amazons and contemporary women's lives and spirituality. Weinbaum examines the use and development of the Amazon archetype throughout history to the present. She shows how Amazons have been used in writing as a symbol for women's lives and to support or deny women's autonomy.

Beginning with Greek legends, Weinbaum traces the Amazon archetype in women who are lesbian, black, connected to nature, their bodies, maternity, and matriarchy. Weinbaum notes, "those who represent Amazons reveal themselves and their own social context" (60). There is no absolute truth or single representation of Amazon women. A particular strength of this book is its contextualized analysis of Amazon scholarship across history, disciplines, geographic settings, and forms of creative expression (dance, poetry, oral narratives). Weinbaum also argues persuasively that earth-based, female-centred cultures had to be subdued by patriarchal Christianity.

Weinbaum offers a powerful analysis of oral lamentation – women's response to being left by men who go off to war – in a variety of societies. She examines the world of Amazon women: how women's collectives were formed, where they lived, how they bore and raised children, how they related to men and boys, how they related to one another, to Mother Earth and Goddess figures. Weinbaum moves across European myths and archeology to Columbus's journals of North America, Marco Polo's journals of the Far East, and Celtic

myths of Avalon. She takes us on a fascinating journey through ancient myths and Renaissance scholarship.

Finally, Weinbaum takes us to the Isla Mujeres (Island of Women) off the coast of Yucatan. Here, she shares her daily life as diviner, graduate student, pregnant woman, and later as mother to illustrate the cultural collision of "primitive folk wisdom" and the "advanced Western mind." Weinbaum claims, "we project a transference onto the island's opaque open door from our own need to compensate for loss in Modern society" (161). Readers learn how Weinbaum and the indigenous people relate: she comes from the culture the islanders envy and mimic, while she is searching for what predates tourism and the stage-managed, packaged local culture. These oppositions come together in her experience of childbirth where she is attended by a senora midwife, a British woman doctor, and a local young woman educated to be a nurse. Although she seeks guidance from her midwife, Weinbaum's fear and lack of knowledge cause her to turn to the British doctor during labour. She acknowledges that we are "part and parcel of what we study" (234) and finally comes to see how Amazons and islands of women are rendered invisible. Weinbaum concludes that in the "unhinged culture" of America, people are searching for "an Eden of sustained nurturance" (239). She invites her female readers to create their own stories of Amazons, to deepen their sense of being embodied, generative, and spiritual women.

Mothers and Motherhood: Readings in American History

Rima D. Apple and Janet Golden, eds.
Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1997

Reviewed by Donna Varga

Mothers & Motherhood: Readings in American History brings together a compilation of social and cultural writings on the issue of mothering as constructed and lived. Of twenty-five chapters, all but three have been previously published; with one exception, the chapters were first published in the 1980s or 1990s. The readings have been organized into four thematic sections: the social construction of motherhood; motherhood and reproduction; social and cultural settings; and public policy. Within each section, contributions cover a variety of issues and focus on a range of historical periods. For example, the section on the social construction of motherhood includes a chapter on breastfeeding and

infant care in England and America from the late 1500s to the late1700s; a chapter on mother love in the nineteenth century; and a chapter on maternal grief arising from miscarriage, stillbirth, or infant death during the period 1920-1985. The section on public policy includes chapters on topics such as health, birth control, and maternal employment. While the majority of the book focuses on European and American women, eight chapters deal specifically with minority cultural groups. Two examples are Loretta J. Ross's, "African American Women and Abortion, 1800-1970" and George J. Sanchez's "'Go after the women': Americanization and the Mexican Immigrant Woman, 1915-1929."

The thematic organization of the book allows for a wide variety of topics and eras to be covered. As a result, however, *Mothers & Motherhood* does not thoroughly discuss a single period or topic. This might not suit readers who are seeking a focussed examination of a specific issue. Readers also will find that the book does not offer a comprehensive study of mothering history. Rather it encourages knowledgeable readers to discover connections among the various chapters.

Since much of the book consists of reprinted material, many scholars already may be familiar with its content. The range of readings included, however, and the narrow scope within which most academics work, makes it likely that many will uncover new material. The book will be useful in women's studies courses, since most chapters will be accessible and interesting to undergraduate students. In my own experience of teaching of Rima Apple's "Constructing Mothers: Scientific Motherhood in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," I received enthusiastic feedback from students and found that the chapter more than adequately dealt with the issues of child development and mothering. In addition, graduate students and those teaching specialized courses on mothering will find the book useful. The editors' provision of bibliographies for each section extends the value of the book. Overall, the high quality of the book's content and its range of material make it highly suitable for personal and institutional libraries.

Fragments of Motherhood

Batya Weinbaum
E. Montpelier, VT: Angel Fish Press, 1996

Reviewed by Roxanne Harde

In the three brief poems included in this chapbook, Batya Weinbaum captures the essence of mothering a toddler. Weinbaum's work, both free verse and

prose poems, combine her experiences as mother and professor of English. Despite several typographical errors and some idiomatic Spanish, the book is a delight to read. Weinbaum's descriptive passages are especially well turned; for example, she describes herself undergoing root canal as "dependent and helpless and psychologically buckled into that crinkly leather chair." Such succinct description characterizes Weinbaum's acute observations.

These observations are linked by Weinbaum's overarching theme of motherhood. The opening poem, "Return to Isla: January 1995," describes life with a toddler. The speaker has become "Just tits, and a stool to / climb on. Something to bite." The poem, however, turns to the better parts of mothering a two-year-old, "the appreciation of small moments." While "Return" lacks the depth of subsequent poems, it is itself a "small moment" of appreciation of all mothers. "The Abscess of Desire" rejects the image of the mother presented in "Return," as the speaker opens with a rich description of her desire for the dentist on a small Mexican island. The eroticism of the opening poetry gives way to the humorous prose description of her painful root canal and her curiosity about the other mouths her dentist examines. These musings soon turn to the reality of motherhood, her physical and emotional attachment to her young daughter, and their departure from the island. The eroticism of the speaker's desire balances her otherwise mechanical attention to life's details.

"Our Silly Mom" is a charming conflation of generations as Weinbaum gives a toddler's view of her mother's quest for spiritual enlightenment. Every move made by the mother to find transcendence with a group focussed on motherhood is countered by the reality of the child she mothers. As the toddler's noise and movement are restricted by women in the ashram, her mother privileges the child who must move and sing. The poem carries multiplicities of meaning as the voice of the child wavers between adult sophistication and descriptions of things children like. For example, she directs the narrative with description – "our silly mom got very purposeful" – and interjections – "so, as I was saying." She also dwells on the childlike wish to live in a school bus. The results are charming; the mother of a toddler has her hands full, but this toddler's description of her mother's quest makes clear that enlightenment is more likely to be experienced in the intimacy shared by child and mother.

Implicit in *Fragments of Motherhood* is Weinbaum's criticism of those who cleave to the ideal of motherhood but dismiss the labour of actual mothering. She makes explicit, however, her understanding that the rewards of motherhood are available through physical and emotional work.

Looking Back, Looking Forward: Mothers, Daughters, and Feminism

Guest Editorial Board: Sharon Abbey, Brenda Cranney, Jeanne Maranda, Evelyn Marrast, Ruby K. Newman, Andrea O'Reilly, Christy Taylor
Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme 18. 2-3 (Summer-Fall 1998)

Reviewed by Julie Thacker

This special double issue of *Canadian Woman Studies* celebrates an important milestone—its twentieth anniversary—and 30 years of feminism. The issue, which includes poems and pictures, is designed to spark discussion in Women's Studies courses about women's equality, why patriarchy needs to be dismantled, and the successes of feminism.

The guest editors describe their threefold objectives for this special issue: "to expand the definition of motherhood," to celebrate the diversity of mother-daughter interactions, and "to validate the interdependence between feminism and mother-daughter empowerment" (5). I applaud the vision of the editors and the courage of the contributors whose work is gathered here under four themes: empowerment, agency, narrative, and motherline. I heartily recommend this special issue of *Canadian Woman Studies*; it offers a moving record of the vision of past and present feminists.

Sharon Abbey's article, "Mentoring My Daughter: Contradictions and Possibilities," is particularly relevant to my own situation. I and my 19 year-old daughter struggle, much like Abbey and her daughter, to honour rather than discount our own acquired knowledge. Abbey's wisdom, along with several other women's active mentoring, will help me guide and nurture my daughter through pitfalls as we adapt "to ongoing transformation; honoring the power of dependency, individuation, and embodied wisdom" (26). Abbey's prescription for reciprocal mentoring of our daughters is a new method of parenting that has the potential to challenge and dismantle the dominant patriarchal system.

The section devoted to the theme of agency examines policies and institutions that have sought to sever the mother-daughter relationship: research methodology; government control and policy formation; the media; and religion. The articles in this section urge readers to be vigilant and to resist patriarchal power structures. Ruby K. Newman's "Survival Narratives of Ethiopian Jewish Mothers and Daughters," for example, describes mothers and daughters who have fled Ethiopia for Israel. The daughters take pride in their mothers' courage in leading their families on their difficult journeys and adapting to their new culture.

In "Looking Back, Looking Forward," the final article in the issue, Ursula M. Franklin states that the massacre of 14 young women on 6 December 1989

at L'Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal is a reminder of the chilly—and chilling—climate for all women. She calls on young women to remember and support their ageing mentors, and to remember that feminism provides "a way of life that our society... desperately requires and that we need to practice." Her article provides a fitting conclusion to a well-written and finely edited issue that will inspire readers.

Jewish Mothers Tell Their Stories: Acts of Love and Courage

Rachel Josefowitz Siegel, Ellen Cole, Susan Steinberg-Oren
New York: Haworth Press, 2000

Reviewed by Rivka Greenberg

All mothers are challenged daily to address multiple forces in their lives. These forces include their children, partners, families, society, religion, work, and social issues, as well as their own, individual needs. For many Jewish mothers, defining the place of Judaism as a significant value in their lives, responsively and proactively, is an enigmatic and perplexing struggle. For earlier generations, the primary sources of support for mothers were the women in their extended families: mothers, grandmothers, sisters, aunts, and cousins. Increased mobility, economic shifts, and work outside of the home have diminished the influence of the extended family and mothers have had to find new ways to meet their need for support, guidance, and community. This is particularly true within the context of Jewish community, where many Jewish mothers struggle to find a place for Judaism in their lives. Today, many Jewish women – unaffiliated, Reconstructionist, Reform, and Conservative – seek community outside of synagogues and other Jewish institutions. Moreover, Jewish women and their families are no longer living in "Jewish" sections of cities, lessening their opportunities for connecting with other Jewish women. So how can Jewish mothers find the communal support they need? *Jewish Mothers Tell Their Stories* provides that much needed sense of community.

This book promotes connection among Jewish mothers throughout the world. Thirty-five chapters offer thirty-five insights from Jewish mothers worldwide who share their thoughts and experiences and, in the process, serve as role models and provide support. The six section topics – tradition; love; Jewish values; Jewish identity; spirituality and religion; and the real world – address key aspects of women's lives. The editors have succeeded in moving beyond the stereotypes of Jewish women. The women gathered here represent

Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies and Gender Issues

Susan Sered, ed.
(Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem and Hadassah International Research Institute of Jewish Women, Brandeis University)
Brooklyn, Lambda Publishing, Spring/Summer 2000

Reviewed by Marion Gold

Nashim's Spring/Summer 2000 issue is devoted to the themes of motherhood and the impact of Talmud and modernity on women's lives in Israel and in the Diaspora. The topics under discussion include marriage, divorce, nursing/nurturing/rearing children, bat/bar mitzvah *rites de passage*, immersion in the *mikvah* (ritual bath), the rape of Dinah described in Genesis (32:4), even Zelophehad's daughters' claim on their father's property since he had no sons (Numbers 21:7).

In 1970, the Women's Liberation Movement shifted its focus from liberation to equality, almost creating a new paradigm. Jewish women, emerging as feminists during this time, were denied equality in the ritual life of the synagogue. Soon, however, scholarship in Judaic Studies by women began to flourish in an attempt to seek legitimization for women's equality in the synagogue, in higher learning, and in day-to-day life.

Women researched and authored eleven of the twelve articles included in this issue of *Nashim*. "The times they are a'changing!" and Labovitz's "These are the Labors: Constructions of the Woman Nursing Her Child" is one example of this change. Labovitz draws on her studies in Mishnah and Tosefta to discuss the implications of the wife as wet nurse to her child and how this could impact conditional divorce decrees.

Since I have two daughters, one born in 1959 and one in 1967, I was particularly interested in Halbertal's article, "Maneuvering in a World of Law and Custom?: Maternal Transmission of Ambivalence." Both of my daughters received an intense pre-university Judaic education. But there was little opportunity for them to use their knowledge within the Jewish community. In fact, I was complicit in transmitting an "ambivalence" about Jewish law and custom to my daughters. My oldest daughter, a traditionalist who is married with six children, is a nursery school teacher. My youngest daughter, a strong feminist, is unmarried and in her early thirties; she works as a systems librarian in a university library. She was the recipient of my unconsciously conveyed message that motherhood is not the only worthwhile female endeavour.

As a menopausal woman who was once an active *mikvah* goer, I was drawn to Cicurel's article on *mikvah* as a contested domain. Her fieldwork, conducted in Beer Sheva, Israel over the period of a year, confirmed my understanding of

the reasons for immersion in a *mikvah* are similar for both religious and secular women, in Israel and in North America. Cicurel indicates the orthodox women follow the dictates of the rabbinate and immerse in *mikvah* after the cessation of their monthly menses cycle. Secular women, however, regard participation in the experience of immersion not as ritual purification but as evidence of female power.

Whether or not a reader is in agreement with the authors represented in this issue of *Nashim*, one can rejoice that women's voices have been raised in scholarship in Jewish women's studies and gender issues.

Contributor Notes

Lisa G. Algazi, associate professor of French at Hood College in Frederick, Maryland, has published numerous articles on maternal subjectivity in nineteenth-century French narrative. Her research and teaching interests center on motherhood in French literature, feminist psychoanalytic criticism, and the nineteenth-century novel. Currently she is working on representations of breast-feeding in nineteenth-century France.

Aneja Anu was born and lived in New Delhi until 1982, where she received her undergraduate degree in French literature. She earned her Master's and Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from Penn State. Aneja is currently Associate Prof, Humanities, at Ohio Wesleyan University, where she teaches world lit and women's studies courses. Publications include essays on contemporary writers, French feminism, and creative writing.

Marla J. Arvay is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, Canada. She has a daughter currently attending Queens' University. Her research interests include adolescent sexuality and secondary traumatic stress. She teaches qualitative research methods in the graduate program, supervises clinical counselling practice, and employs narrative methods in her research.

Jean F. Ayers, Psy.D., is an Associate Professor of Psychology at Towson University. A parent of two (Justin, age 12 and Autumn, age 8), Jean is a practicing clinical psychologist and an aspiring midwife.

Patricia Bell-Scott is Professor of Child and Family Development & Women's

Studies and an Adjunct Professor of Psychology at the University of Georgia in Athens. She was founding co-editor of *SAGE: A Scholarly Journal on Black Women* and principal editor of the award-winning anthology, *Double Stitch: Black Women Write about Mothers and Daughters*. She is co-editor of the first text in Black women's studies, *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks are Men: But Some of Us Are Brave*, as well as editor of *Life Notes: Personal Writings by Contemporary Black Women, and Flat-footed Truths: Telling Black Women's Lives*. She specializes as a teacher and writer in black women's narratives.

Nicola Bailey works for the Centre for Social Justice at Coventry University (UK) and part-time for a health authority research centre. As well as undertaking a Ph.D. in the elderly and health, she has much broader interests in the health area.

Rebecca Berman is a magna cum laude graduate of Harvard College who is working on a social science research project at Einstein Medical Centre.

Mary Kay Blakely is an Associate Professor at the Missouri School of Journalism. She is the author of three books, including *Wake Me When It's Over—A Journey to the Edge and Back* (Times Books/Random House) and *American Mom—Motherhood, Politics and Humble Pie* (Algonquin/Pocket Books), and her essays have been collected in numerous anthologies. A Hers columnist for the *New York Times* and currently a contributing editor to *Ms.* and the *Los Angeles Times* magazine, she has published essays and articles about social issues in *Mother Jones, Life, Working Woman, McCalls, Redbook, Psychology Today, Self, the Chicago Tribune, the New York Times Book Review* and numerous other national publications. Her work has been translated and published in Germany, the Netherlands, Japan, England and Italy. She now teaches Advanced Writing at the University of Missouri and is the director of the New York Summer Journalism Program at the New School University.

Geraldine Brown works for the Centre for Social Justice at Coventry University (UK) and she has interests in education, black women and mental health, and issues of primary care.

Petra Büskens is a PhD. candidate at The Ashworth Centre for Social Theory, Melbourne University, Australia. Her interests include feminist, social and political theory. She is currently conducting an empirical research project on mothers who leave their families. Between January and June 2001 she was a visiting scholar at The Centre for Research on Mothering. She has published several journal and book articles on mothers who leave.

Paula J. Caplan, Ph.D., is the author of the new *Don't Blame Mother: Mending the Mother-Daughter Relationship* and eight other books. She is a Visiting

Scholar at the Pembroke Center for Research and Teaching on Women at Brown University and is former Professor of Applied Psychology and Head of the Centre for Women's Studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. She is also a playwright, actor, and director, and her play, *Call Me Crazy*, includes a monologue delivered by "Amalia Freud" (Freud's mother) that is partly about mother-blame and being a mother. She lectures and teaches workshops about mothers and daughters, as well as other subjects, and has helped organized social and political action about various matters, including sexism in psychiatric diagnosis and in the use of psychotropic drugs. Her most recent work on the latter is addressed in part in her recent article in the *National Women's Health Network's "Network News."*

Mielle Chandler is a Ph.D. candidate in the graduate programme in Social and Political Thought at York University. She works in the cross-sections of political theory, ethics, ontology and the maternal.

Stephanie Chastain has degrees in French and Women Studies as well as a doctorate in Comparative Literature from the University of Washington. She teaches a variety of subjects at a variety of levels and has done crisis and social work with women in Seattle. She is a concert pianist manquée and directs Wonderchild, a summer piano camp for children.

Judith C. Daniluk, Ph.D., is a professor of Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia. Her areas of interest include women's sexuality and reproductive health, voluntary and involuntary childlessness, and developmental transitions.

Patrice DiQuinzio is Associate Professor of Philosophy and Director of Women's Studies at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, PA, USA. She is the author of *The Impossibility of Motherhood: Feminism, Individualism, and the Problem of Mothering* (Routledge, 1999) and is co-editor with Iris Marion Young of *Feminist Ethics and Social Policy* (Indiana University Press, 1997). Her articles on philosophical problems in theorizing motherhood and on motherhood as a model for citizenship have appeared in *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy and Women and Politics*. She is currently at work on a project analyzing contemporary instances of U.S. women's civic engagement conducted under the sign of motherhood, such as the Million Mom March and Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

Cheryl Dobinson is the Administrative Co-ordinator for ARM. She holds an MA in Sociology from York University and her studies have focused on women, youth and sexuality. Her work on sexual identity has been published in *Herizons* and *The Journal of Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Identity*. Her most recent publications include a co-authored article on lesbians and film in *The Journal of*

Homosexuality and a piece on transsexual legal issues for *Fireweed.*

Carol Duncan is a faculty member in the Department of Religion and Culture at Wilfrid Laurier University. Her research interests include African Diasporic religious and cultural expressions, especially the Spiritual Baptist Church in Canada, and Caribbean immigration to Canada.

Rishma Dunlop is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education at York University. Her current research and teaching interests are poetry, women, and the academy, literary studies and the imagination, arts-based research and alternative practices in educational research. Her poetry and essays have won awards and have been published in: *Literator* (South Africa), *Poetry Nottingham International* (UK), *Room of One's Own, English Quarterly, Canadian Woman Studies, Contemporary Verse 2, Dandelion, JCT, Grain, Event, Whetstone, Canadian Journal of Education, Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering, Redefining Motherhood: Changing Identities and Patterns.* Rishma Dunlop was a finalist in poetry in the 1998 CBC Canada Council Literary Awards. Her first novel was a semi-finalist for the Chapters/Robertson Davies Prize in 1999. Her collection of poetry titled *Boundary Bay* was published by Staccato Press in June 2000.

Miriam Edelson is a social activist, mother and writer living in Toronto. Her creative non-fiction and commentaries have appeared in *The Globe and Mail, The Toronto Star,* CBC Radio, *This Magazine* as well as other periodicals. Born in New York, Edelson spent her teens in Toronto and completed graduate studies in political science at Carleton University. She is fluent in French and is currently pursuing doctoral studies in sociology and bio-ethics part-time at the University of Toronto. Her particular area of interest is social policy regarding the care of medically-fragile infants. Edelson has worked in the trade union movement since 1980, specializing in communications and human rights issues. She lives in Toronto with her daughter Emma.

Marie Aline Seabra Ferreira received her Ph.D. from the University of London (Birkbeck College) in 1988. Since 1987 she has been at the University of Aveiro, Portugal, where she is now an Associate Professor. Recent publications include "The Foreigner Within: Teaching The Rainbow with the Help of Cixous, Kristeva and Irigaray" in *MLA's Approaches to Teaching D.H.Lawrence* (2001); "Organizing Men Out in Joanna Russ's *The Female Man* and Fay Weldon's *The Cloning of Joanna May,*" in *Science Fiction and Organization* (Smith, Higgins, Parker and Lightfoot, 2001); two articles in *Études Lawrenciennes:* "A Reading of D. H. Lawrence and Luce Irigaray's Notion of Wonder,"(Vol. 22, 2000) and "Lawrence's 'Fleurs du Mal': Abjection in Women in Love," (Vol. 25, 2001); and "Another Jouissance: Secular and Mystical Love in Kate Chopin's 'Two Portraits'" in *Literature and Psychology* (2000).

Lara Foley is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Tulsa where she teaches courses in sociology of medicine, sociology of mental health and sociology of reproduction and birth. Her research interests focus on women's health, particularly in the area of reproduction. She is currently presenting and publishing work from her dissertation entitled "Catching Babies: Identity and Legitimation in Midwives' Work Narratives."

M. Paz Galupo, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of Psychology at Towson University. As a single mother of Isabel (9 years old), she has both a personal and professional interest in motherhood experiences.

Fiona Giles is a writer and academic, living in Sydney, Australia. She is completing a book on the culture of lactation, *Fresh Milk: The Secret Life of Breasts,* to be published in February 2003.

Marion Gold is writing a thesis entitled Narrative Inquiry into a Woman's Life. It is the narrative of a woman transformed through the experiences of marriage, childbirth, child rearing, grandmothering and great grandmothering whose past has shaped and informed her personal practical knowledge and serves as prologue to a future devoted to learning, teaching, writing and reflection.

Fiona Joy Green is an assistant professor in the Women's Studies Programme at the University of Winnipeg. Giving birth to her son and mothering as a feminist has been the catalyst for her Ph.D. dissertation "Living Feminism: Pedagogy and praxis in mothering" . Work related to this research is published in Vol. 1 (1) of the *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering* and in *The Legacy of Adrienne Rich's Of Woman Born* (forthcoming, SUNY Press). While Fiona teaches courses focused on gender and the sciences, feminist research methodologies and women and health, her current areas of scholarly interest also include: feminist/ maternal pedagogy, gender performance and gender and sexuality.

Rivka Greenberg, Ph.D., is an independent consultant working in the field of maternal/child/family education and welfare, which encompasses infant mental health, special needs and substance abuse. She has worked in educational, social services and health care programs in the United States and abroad.

Merryl Hammond is a (step-)mother to five children. She is a nurse and midwife, with a Ph.D in adult education and community health. She started a support group for at-home mothers, Mothering Matters, (www.motheringmatters.org) over ten years ago. She lives in Montreal with her husband and children.

Roxanne Harde is a doctoral candidate at Queen's University. Her thesis

explores the intersections between American women's poetry and contemporary feminist theologies. She has published articles on American women's writing, contemporary novels, and feminist theory in journals such as *Critique, Legacy*, and in several collections.

Bernice L. Hausman is associate professor of English at Virginia Tech, where she teaches courses in feminist theory and cultural studies. She is author of *Changing Sex: Transsexualism, Technology, and the Idea of Gender* (Duke 1995), and has recently completed a manuscript entitled *Breastfeeding under the Sign of the Bottle: Essays on Feminism, Medicine, and Motherhood.*

Cornelia Hoogland's third book of poetry, *You Are Home* (Black Moss Press, 2001), was shortlisted for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Tilden Literary Awards; performed by the World Cultures Theatre in Exeter, England; and supported by the Ontario Arts Council. Hoogland's poetry challenges the ways we create a sense of place in the urban and natural landscapes. She relates where we are to who we are, and how we are in light of the sprawling virtual world that dissolves physical location into no place at all, and in light of the tens of millions of people who are physically born in North America but do not actually live here intellectually, imaginatively, or morally. Hoogland lives in London Ontario, where she teaches at the University of Western Ontario, and can be reached at chooglan@uwo.ca.

Elizabeth Bourque Johnson, Ph.D., teaches writing and literature at the University of Minnesota. Her poetry has won several awards and is published widely. She developed and teaches "Writing Through Grief" and has written for *Second Opinion*, a journal of medical ethics. She contributed the opening chapter, "Mothers at Work: Representations of Maternal Practice in Literature," in *Mothers and Daughters: Connection, Empowerment, and Transformation* (Abbey and O'Reilly, 2000).

Miriam Johnson is a retired Professor of Sociology at the University of Oregon whose teaching and writing has been focused on gender and the family throughout her career. She is the author of a book entitled *Strong Mothers, Weak Wives* and co-author with Jean Stockard of a text on sex and gender. She and her husband of many years live in Oregon where they both taught sociology. They have two children, one married and one single. Currently she is affiliated with the Council on Contemporary Families, which attempts to get accurate research information out about the many different kinds of contemporary families besides the so called "ideal" nuclear family that now exist in the U.S. and Canada.

Nané Jordan is a MA student and growing hugely pregnant with my second child. She is wildly hoping to finish the first draft of her thesis on birth and

ecofeminism before giving birth herself! She has a four-year-old daughter, is a visual artist, and has worked as a birth attendant in Vancouver, B.C.

Patrice A. Keats is a mother of two—a son and daughter in later adolescence. She is also a doctoral candidate in the Counselling Psychology program at the University of British Columbia studying relationship dynamics in trauma narratives. Her other research interests include parent-child relationships, expressive therapies, and group dynamics.

Simone Kennedy was born in England in 1963. In 1981 she emigrated to Australia and studied design at the University of South Australia, graduating BA. Since 1989 she has worked as a fine artist painting in oils and mixed media whilst developing soft sculptures. In 1998 she commenced study for a Masters by Research degree in Visual Arts. Currently she lives and works in Adelaide, South Australia.

Chris Klassen is a Ph.D. candidate in the Women's Studies program at York University in Toronto. She is currently working on her dissertation which explores the construction of identity in feminist witchcraft through speculative fiction.

Karen C. Kranz, M.A., is a doctoral candidate in Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia. Her clinical and research interests include lesbian identity development, developmental issues for women in midlife, relationships, and families.

Dannabang Kuwabong is an Assistant Professor in English at the University of Puerto Rico, Recinto de Rmo Piedras, San Juan. He teaches Caribbean and African Literatures, and Literature by Women. He has published in several academic journals including The Journal for the Association of Research on Mothering and ARIEL. He is a poet, and his most recent collection is Echoes from Dusty Rivers (1999), published by Capricornus Enterprises in Canada. Presently he is working on a book length study on African-derived spirituality in Africaribbean women's writing. He is a founding member of ARM.

Becky R. Leeis an Assistant Professor in the Division of Humanities and the School of Women's Studies at York University.

Gayle Letherby works for the Centre for Social Justice at Coventry University (UK). Amongst other things Gayle is interested in motherhood/non-motherhood and kinship, social and cultural aspects of train travel and auto/biographical methods.

Gail M. Lindsay is an Assistant Professor in the School of Nursing at York

University in Toronto. She is the mother of Paul, an artist and car designer. Her research, called Nothing Personal, is a narrative inquiry into the experiences of Registered Nurses in healthcare and in education reform.

Susan MacCallum-Whitcomb spent a decade in academia, teaching American literature and publishing widely on the subject of maternity poetry. Her critical anthology, *"This Giving Birth:" Pregnancy and Childbirth in American Women's Writing*, co-edited with Dr. Julie Tharp, was published by Popular Press in 2000. The mother of two young children, Susan recently moved to Halifax where she works as a freelance writer and reseacher.

Carolyn Mitchell, professor of English and Director of Women's Studies, earned her Ph.D. from Boston College, her Master's from Michigan State University, and her Bachelor's from Hunter College. The author of a number of books and articles, her interests include nineteenth- and twentieth-century American literature, African American literature, women's literature, Victorian fiction, women's studies, theory and criticism.

Collette Morrow is an associate professor of English and the Director of Women's Studies at Purdue University Calumet in Hammond, IN (U.S.A.). She is a Fulbright Scholar and served her grant year in Belarus, a former Soviet Republic, where she taught women's/gender studies and worked to develop gender studies programs.

Ruth Nemzoff is the former assistant minority leader of the New Hampshire State Legislature and the first female Deputy Commissioner of Health and Welfare in the state. She is currently an adjunct associate professor at Bentley College and a resident scholar at Brandeis University's Women's Studies Research Center where she worked on this paper. Dr Nemzoff holds a Bachelor's degree in American Studies from Barnard College, a Master's degree in Counseling from Columbia University and a Doctorate in Administration, Planning and Social Policy from Harvard University. She and her husband, Harris Berman have four children and live in West Newton, Massachusetts.

Renee Norman, Ph.D., is a poet and writer who teaches drama, Language Arts, gender and autobiography courses in the education faculty at the University of BC. Her poetry and essays have been published in literary and academic journals as well as newspapers and anthologies. A piece on writing and mothering was recently broadcast on *First Person Singular*, CBC. Her book, *House of Mirrors: Performing Autobiograph(icall)y in Language/Education* was published by Peter Lang, NY. She is the mother of three school-age daughters

Andrea O'Reilly, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor in the School of Women's

Studies at York University where she teaches courses on Toni Morrison, on motherhood, and on mothers and daughters. She has presented her research at numerous international conferences and she is the author of more than a dozen articles and chapters on these topics. She is co-editor of *Redefining Motherhood: Changing Identities and Patterns* (Second Story Press, 1998), *Mothers and Daughters: Connection, Empowerment and Transformation* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2000) and the special 20th anniversary issue of *Canadian Woman Studies* (Fall 1998) on Mothers and Daughters. She is the author of *Toni Morrison on Motherhood* (forthcoming from Ohio State Press) and editor of *Mothers and Sons: Feminism, Masculinity and the Challenge to Raise our Sons* (Routledge Press 2001). In 1998 she was the recipient of the University wide "Teacher of theYear" award at York University. O'Reilly is founding president of the Association forResearch on Mothering, (ARM) and is founding editor/ publisher of the ARM journal. She has conducted numerous community workshops on motherhood, mothers and daughters, and mothers and sons and has been interviewed widely on these topics. Andrea and her common-law spouse of 18 years are the parents of a sixteen-year old son and two daughters, ages eleven and fourteen.

Ruth Panofsky is the Journal's book review editor. She is a member of the Department of English at Ryerson University where she teaches Canadian Literature. She is author of *Adele Wiseman: An Annotated Bibliography* (1992) and co-editor of *Selected Letters of Margaret Laurence and Adele Wiseman* (1997).

Christine Peets is the mother of two sons, ages 20 and 17. Her mother died in September 2000. She is thankful for the caring professionals who smoothed her mother's transition from home to institution, in spite of restrictive government regulations. She is also grateful for the excellent care her mother received. Christine is currently researching and writing a book on breaking the patterns of depression and alcoholism in mothers and daughters—two illnesses that contributed to her mother's early death. She hopes this research will lead to a better and healthier life for her, her husband Jim, and their sons.

Nicole Pietsch is a recent graduate from the University of Toronto, with a degree in Women Studies. Nicole has completed significant research and writing on the subjects of adoption, il/legitimacy, reproductive politics, popular education and body-based knowledge. She plans to pursue a post-graduate degree in women's health, reproductive politics and women's counseling.

Joanna Radbord is a lawyer with the firm of Epstein, Cole, and is a lesbian who is planning a pregnancy with her spouse. Her practice focuses on family law and gay and lesbian equality rights, and she is particularly interested in the legal regulation of lesbian mothering. Joanna was involved with *M. v. H.*, the first Supreme Court of Canada decision to successfully challenge the definition of

"spouse" as restricted to opposite-sex couples. She was counsel to a lesbian father in *Forrester v. Saliba*, which states that transsexuality is irrelevant to a child's best interests. She is currently co-counsel to the eight same-sex couples seeking the freedom to choose civil marriage in Ontario. In that case, the federal government's arguments largely centre on reserving procreation and child-rearing for heterosexuals only.

Jennifer A. Reich is a doctoral candidate in Sociology, with a designated emphasis is Feminist Theory and Methods, at the University of California, Davis. Her dissertation, a qualitative study of the child welfare system, shows how parents strategize cooperation and resistance in interactions with the state and how the state's narrow definitions of parental rehabilitation reinforce dominant definitions gender and family.

Sara Ruddick is the author of *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace*. She has co-edited three anthologies, most recently *Mother Troubles: Reflections on Contemporary Maternal Dilemmas*. For many years she taught at The New School University in New York City where she lives.

Gill Rye is a lecturer in French at the Institute of Romance Studies (University of London). She publishes widely on contemporary French women's writing and is currently preparing a book, *Mothering with a Difference*, which explores how contemporary literature can help us think differently about mothers and mothering.

Lori Saint-Martin is a professor in the literature department at the Université du Québec à Montréal. She has published two books of short fiction, *Lettre imaginaire à la femme de mon amant* (1991) and *Mon père, la nuit* (1999), French translations of 6 English-Canadian novels, in collaboration with Paul Gagné (one of which, *Un parfum de cèdre*, a translation of Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Fall on Your Knees*, won the Governor General's award for translation in 2000), and several books of non-fiction on women's writing in Québec, including *Le nom de la mère. Mères, filles et écriture dans la littérature québécoise au féminin* (*The Name of the Mother: Mothers, Daughters and Writing in Quebec Women's Fiction*), 1999. A book-length feminist study of Gabrielle Roy's fiction, *La voyageuse et la prisonnière. Gabrielle Roy et la question des femmes*, is forthcoming from Éditions du Boréal. Her current research project is on fathers and children in contemporary Québec fiction (supported by SSHRC grant). With Paul Gagné, she has two children, Nicolas, born in 1993, and Anna, born in 1995.

Elisabeth Speller is a mother, activist, writer, worker, student and lesbian, not necessarily in that order! She has been a telephonist, market-research interviewer, shop assistant, seamstress, life model, childbirth educator, internationally qualified lactation consultant, birth attendant/lay midwife, adult educator,

and tutor. She was actively involved in the homebirth movement and gave birth to four of her five children at home. She breastfed for a total of nearly eight years, and homeschooled for some time. She has a firm grounding in community activism in the area ofpregnancy/birth/breastfeeding. She is currently a Masters student at Latrobe University, Melbourne, Australia researching the way women mother their 15-24 year old children, while also working occasionally as an information officer at the Australian Breastfeeding Association (formerly Nursing Mothers Association of Australia).

Stephanie Springgay is a Ph.D. student at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver. Her research and artistic interests include aesthetics, visual culture, the body, feminist theory, and social justice and the arts. As an artist and art educator she has taught art classes at the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Royal Ontario Museum, and as a visiting artist in the schools, funded by the Ontario Arts Council. Presently, she teaches in the Bachelor of Education program at the University of British Columbia. She has exhibited her work throughout Canada and held an International Residency at the Kanoria Art Center in Ahmedabad, India. Her work has been published in *Mix; Visual Arts Ontario; Women Art Educators V* (in press); *Questioning Authority: Women in the Academy* (in press); *A/R/T as Living Practice* (in press); and *New Waves in Art Education* (in press). Her thesis, "The Body Knowing" was represented as a visual art installation. To view this artwork, or to read more about her scholarship, please visit Springgay's web site www.springgay.com.

Cassie Premo Steele, Ph.D. is a poet and writer who lives in Columbia, South Carolina. She has published books on the poetry of witness and creative ways to embrace menstruation, and currently is writing a book on motherhood, healing, and the Irish famine. She teaches part-time in the Women's Studies Program at the University of South Carolina and specializes in courses on motherhood, feminist theory, and writing as a way of healing.

Julie Thacker completed her MA in Gender Studies at the University of Northern British Columbia in 2000. Her thesis entitled, "Mothers Who Live Apart From Their Children," explores the lives of these women and their marginalisation. She is the mother of an 18-year-old son and a 20-year-old daughter.

Andrea Riesch Toepell is Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences at Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario. She teaches and does research in the fields of community health, gender and health, women and heart health, women in sport and aging. She is currently researching homeschooling for her two preschool aged children.

Donna Varga is associate professor in the Department of Child and Youth

Study at Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax. Along with Harriet Field and Robert Lanning she has studied attitudes held by Canadian and Australian students toward issues of maternal employment and child care, the research on which has appeared in *Education and Society* and in *Canadian Journal of Research in Early Childhood*. Her research on historical issues pertaining to mothering has been published in her book *Constructing the child: A History of Canadian Day Care*, Lorimer, 1997, and as articles in *Women's Studies in Communication*, and *Advances in Early Education and Day Care*. She has co-edited with Roxanne Harde, the forthcoming "Girl Power" special issue of *FEMSPEC*, an interdisciplinary feminist science fiction and fantasy journal. She has designed and taught the third year undergraduate course, "Women and Caregiving: Past, Present and Future" for the Department of Women's Students at Mount Saint Vincent University.

Batya Weinbaum, founding editor of FEMSPEC, teaches multicultural literature at Cleveland State University. Her most recent book is *Islands of Women and Amazons: Representations and Realities*, by University of Texas Press.

Caroline M. Woidat is an Assistant Professor of English at the State University of New York at Geneseo, where she teaches American and Native American literature, creative writing, and women's studies. She lives in Rochester, New York, with her husband and their boy and girl twins.

Corinne Wilson works for the Centre for Social Justice at Coventry University (UK). Her research and teaching Interests include sociology of the family, women and health, interpersonal violence and feminist research.

Jeanne-Marie Zeck is an assistant professor in the English and Drama Department at MacMurray College in Jacksonville, Illinois. She is also a single parent to a first-year college student. American, African-American, and women's literature are her areas of expertise.

Call for Papers

The editorial board is seeking submissions for Vol. 5.1 of the *Journal of The Association for Research on Mothering* (ARM) to be published in Spring/Summer 2003. The journal will explore the subject:

Mothering, Popular Culture and the Arts

The journal will explore the topic of mothering, popular culture and the arts from a variety of perspectives and disciplines. We welcome submissions from students, activists, scholars, artists and others who research in this area. We also welcome creative reflections such as: poetry, short stories, and artwork on the subject.

If you are interested in writing a book review, we have books in need of a review, or if you know of a recent publication that you think would be relevant, please contact Cheryl Dobinson at cjdobins@yorku.ca

Submission Guidelines:
Book reviews are to be no more than 2 pages (500 words), articles should be 15 pages (3750 words).
All should be in MLA style, in WordPerfect or Word and IBM compatible.

For more information, please contact us at:

Association for Research on Mothering
726 Atkinson College, York University
4700 Keele Street, Toronto, ON, Canada, M3J 1P3.
Call us at (416) 736-2100, x60366, or email us at arm@yorku.ca
or visit our website at www.yorku.ca/crm

Submissions must be received by **November 1, 2002.**

To submit work to the journal, one must be a member of ARM and memberships must be received by November 1, 2002.

Call for Papers

The Association for Research on Mothering (ARM)
invites submissions of abstracts for our
7th annual conference on

Mothering, Religion and Spirituality

October 24-26, 2003
York University, Toronto, Canada

Historically and cross-culturally the world's religions and spiritualities have simultaneously restricted mothers' roles and activities while conversely giving mothers some agency and authority. This conference will explore, from a variety of perspectives and disciplines, the impact of religion and spirituality on the experience of mothering and of mothers on religion and spirituality. It will examine mothers' lived experience as well as representations of mothering-motherhood in religion.

We welcome submissions from students, activists, scholars, artists and others who work or research in this area. Cross-cultural, historical and comparative work is encouraged. We encourage a variety of types of submissions including academic papers, workshops, creative submissions, performances, storytelling, visual arts and other alternative formats.

Topics can include, but are not limited to:

•Mothers in sacred texts and oral traditions •Mother figures in religious history •Interfaith mothering •Church mothers •Mother deities/goddesses •Mother archetypes •The Great Mother •Feminist spirituality and mothering •Religious feminisms •The virgin mother •Womanist

——Call for Papers——

theology •Mothering, religion and ideologies •Childbirth and spirituality •Mothering, religion and spirituality through the ages •Mothering in the Ancient World •Grandmothering and othermothering •Colonialism, religion, and mothering •Mothers and religious education •Indigenous spirituality and mothering •Mothering, sex and spirituality •Lesbian/bisexual/transgender/queer mothering in religious contexts •Dis/ability, mothering, religion and spirituality •Atheism, secularization, and mothering •Religious oppression of mothers •Race, class, mothering and religion/ spirituality •Mothering and new religious movements •Mothers of religious leaders •Mothers as religious leaders •Resistance, maneuvering and compliance of mothers in religion •Mothers of the nation •Mothering, reproductive technologies and spirituality •Infertility and religion/spirituality.

There will also be 'Open Stream' Sessions on the general topic of Mothering-Motherhood

If you are interested in being considered as a presenter, please send a 250-word-abstract and a 50 word bio by Sept. 15, 2002 to:

Association for Research on Mothering
726 Atkinson College, York University, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, ON, Canada M3J 1P3
Call us at (416) 736-2100 x 60366,
or email us at arm@yorku.ca

One must be a member of ARM to submit an abstract.

Association for Research on Mothering

ARM 2002-2003 MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please indicate your membership option (one year and two year memberships and subscriptions are available):

Full ARM Membership includes: biannual newsletter • members directory •listserve •annual conference •thematic conference •special events •advance notification of upcoming events •information mailings •subscription to the *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering*)

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Basic ARM Membership includes: biannual newsletter • members directory •listserve •annual conference •thematic conference •special events •advance notification of upcoming events • information mailings

❑ individual $40.00 Cdn/US* ❑ student/unwaged $30.00 Cdn/US*
❑ 2 yrs/ind. $70.00 Cdn/US* ❑ 2 yrs/student/unwaged$50.00 Cdn/US*

Subscription to the *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering*: (a biannual publication)

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❑ 2 yrs/ind. $52.00 Cdn/US* ❑ 2 yrs/inst. $92.00 Cdn/US*

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Fax: (905) 775-1386
Email: arm@yorku.ca
Website: http//: www.yorku.ca/crm