Communicating Motherhood/ Mothers Communicating in Popular Culture and Social Media

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**Spring/Summer 2015
Volume 6, Number 1**

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Front cover photograph:
Photo: Barbara Bickel, "Dream Scroll," Rome, April 2015. From left to right, Angie Deveau, Andrea O'Reilly, Sara Paiola, Michelle Tarnopolsky, Nané Ariadne Jordan, Laura Zegel, and Eti Wade

Artists' statement: The cover photo captures a spontaneous moment of women holding the Dream Scroll, releasing our collective dreams by those who participated in a Nap-In workshop. The Nap-In, a creative, active-resting practice of the Gestare Art Collective (www.gestareartcollective.com), was facilitated by Nané Jordan and Barbara Bickel at the MIRCI conference on "Maternal Subjectivities" held in Rome on April 24, 2015. Dreams are generated during the Nap-In, and then recorded in fabric onto the Dream Scroll. After the workshop we took the Dream Scroll to the Tiber River. Since 2011, Gestare Art Collective members have developed the creative practice of Nap-Ins as a community art practice in galleries, community centers, university classrooms, schools, conferences, retreat centers, libraries.

EMILY JANUARY PETERSEN

Mommy Bloggers as Rebels and Community Builders

A Generic Description

One site of female activism is mommy blogs, an emerging form of communication in which women can address the constraints and affordances of motherhood. However, female bloggers often face a lack of legitimacy. Generic criticism is one way to recognize female bloggers and address concerns of claiming "professionalism." Viewing mommy bloggers as a genre reveals substantive and stylistic features that work toward organizing principles, which allow us to see mommy bloggers as a justifiable influence in our culture and in professional communication. This article specifically examines the genre of mommy blogging through the characteristics of the top ten mommy blogs in 2012. These characteristics reveal the two organizing principles of rebellion and community, which are rhetorical choices meant to strengthen the network of bloggers and to extend support to the audience. Mommy blogs offer support, particularly emotional, based on generic constraints in the mothering experience, take into account the context of a situation, act as a community to address the guilt and ambivalence in motherhood, and serve as reports of work, validating the home as a workplace and women's issues as worthy of discussion and organization. Mommy bloggers engage in feminine rhetoric, finding similarities and engaging in a community-level consciousness raising.

"Well-behaved women seldom make history" is Harvard history professor Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's homage to women like Christine de Pizan (circa 1363–death unknown), Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815–1902), and Virginia Woolf (1882–1941), who rebelled against the conventions of their times in order to change the status quo (xiii). Today, we still have outspoken and strong women tackling pressing and controversial issues, but they are not necessarily writing novels, staging protests, or giving public speeches. One site of today's

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female activism is mommy blogs, an emerging form of communication and a forum in which women can connect with each other and address women's issues, especially pertaining to motherhood. However, one of the problems many female bloggers face is a lack of legitimacy. As one blogger expressed: "[W]e aren't treated as professionals … being called a 'mommy blogger' seems to downgrade the status and influence that many bloggers have" (Beatrice). These women engage in the work of creating content, finding sponsors, and addressing important issues, yet they may discover that their contributions are minimized and dismissed.

Generic criticism is one way to legitimize mommy bloggers and address their concerns about being considered professionals. While I have previously established mommy bloggers as professionals through their integral relationship with an audience, social responsibility, and ethical awareness (Petersen), recognizing mommy bloggers as a genre gives the movement further legitimacy because it reveals substantive and stylistic features that work toward organizing principles, which allow us to see mommy bloggers as influential in our culture and in professional communication. This article will look at the genre of mommy blogging and identify the common characteristics of the top ten mommy blogs of 2012 through the rhetorical analysis of generic criticism. This analysis leads to two organizing principles of the mommy blog genre: rebellion and community.

Genre and Generic Criticism

Foundationally, Carolyn Miller suggested that genre could be understood in five ways. First, "[g]enre … [is] large-scale typification of rhetorical action;" second, "genre is interpretable by means of rules;" third, "[g]enre is distinct from form;" fourth, genre is "the substance of forms at higher levels … genres help constitute the substance of our cultural life;" and lastly, "[a] genre is a rhetorical means for mediating private intentions and social exigence" ("Genre" 163). Miller further reviewed that "Genre … becomes more than a formal entity; it becomes pragmatic, fully rhetorical, a point of connection between intention and effect, an aspect of social action" (153). Her point is "not to trivialize the study of genres; it is to take seriously the rhetoric in which we are immersed and the situations in which we find ourselves" (155).

One way to answer her call is to consider genre in practice. Miller explained, "that practice creates both knowledge and value and that the value created comprehends the good of the community in which the practice has a history" ("What's Practical" 69). Miller and Dawn Shepherd considered practice through the emergence of web blogs, tracing "ancestral genres that offer rhetorical precedents and patterns … speculat[ing] about the recurrent rhetorical

exigence that has brought together motivations, forms, and audiences to create and sustain the blog as genre" (1). They found that blogs "were chronologically organized, contained links to sites of interest on the web, and provided commentary on the links" (4). Blogs may now demonstrate more complex characteristics (Friedman *Mommyblogs;* Petersen), but Miller and Shepherd's genre analysis is a good description of the genesis of blogs. Nevertheless, they recognized that "[c]ontent is important to bloggers because it represents their freedom of selection and presentation" (5). They suggested that bloggers are concerned with "self-expression and community development" (6), and that "[t]he blog-as-genre is a contemporary contribution to the art of the self" (10).

Clay Spinuzzi's ideas about genre tracing elucidate this art of the self. He argued, "Because imposed standards cannot account for every local contingency, users will tailor the standardized forms, information systems, schedules, and so forth to meet their needs" (3). He clarified genre as not "merely artifact types" but instead "a sort of *tradition*" (emphasis in original, 41). "[T]hey are culturally and historically grounded ways of 'seeing and conceptualizing reality'" (41). He suggested, "In examining genres, then, we can gain an overall understanding of the activities they have historically mediated" (45). Blogs function as a genre in what Spinuzzi called an open system, which "can consist of an officially designed core that provides openings for … contributions" (204). Bloggers are not passively waiting for a designer to tell them how to present content. Rather, they innovate and develop their own responses to recurrent problems within their communities. Genre then becomes a typified response that engages in problem solving.

In addition, María José Luzón explained, "when studying the different forms of communication of a community, researchers need to analyze them in relation to the community's recurrent activities, its organization, and its members' shared knowledge" (288). Studying genre consequently leads to better understanding of a community's activities and relationships among participants. Luzón further suggested, "To understand the communicative practices of a community, it is necessary not only to identify the repertoire of genres used by that community but also to examine how genres work together to mediate social activities" (288). By establishing and uncovering genres, we can determine which rhetorical strategies and organizing principles create and maintain a genre and therefore mediate social activities and create community among participants.

What is a Mommy Blog?

Mashable's definition of mommy bloggers is: "Women who have at least one child in their household and have read or contributed to a blog in the past 30

days" (Laird). However, scholars have reached more nuanced descriptions of mommy blogs and their writers and contributors. Friedman claimed, "This practice of networked life writing online has created a collective of mothers who write shared experiences about mothering and, in the process, have built a sense of community and congruency. This cyberworld has come to be known as the mamasphere, and this genre of blogs are now known as mommyblogs" (*Mommyblogs* 9). She and others, such as Alice Bradley of *Finslippy*, have described mommy blogging as a radical act (34). It is "a collective response to dominant discourses of motherhood" (27). Through blogging, "mothers empower themselves and give voice to their mundanity and their multiplicity, and they connect to an audience of peers who are likewise empowered and validated" (87).

Mommy blogs display five characteristics, according to Friedman, that challenge "the stability of the mother subject" (11). These are diversity in location and experience, a large number of participants, relationality through dialogue and interactivity, an unending narrative that links to the past, and the performance of motherhood as opposed to expert prescriptions (11). Mommy bloggers present "a motherhood that rests in the desperate compromises and imperfections of lived experience rather than in the idealized view of what mothers *ought* to accomplish" (emphasis in original, 129). My generic description of the top ten mommy blogs will illuminate the characteristics that make such a depiction of motherhood possible, and how mommy bloggers rhetorically contribute to a nuanced and multidimensional view of what it means to be a mother and what it means to live life in the private sphere publicly.

As a genre, Lynne Webb and Brittney Lee noted the importance of community among mommy bloggers. The very nature of blogs, that writers often comment on each other's work within a specific blogging platform, means that "mommy bloggers are basically writing to each other and forming a specialized blogging community" (248). Not only does the blog content create community through identification, but the way in which blogs are positioned to be supported by other bloggers means that community is a built-in feature of the genre. However, Webb and Lee explain that mommy bloggers are "positioned to provide and receive social support" that "can be quite meaningful" (248). They concluded that this sort of support can turn into friendship and that "a woman's identity is impacted by being a member of the blogging community and by having a space to share ideas and thoughts" (252).

Method

I am interested in uncovering the unifying concepts that make mommy blogs a genre and how those features can allow us to appreciate the contributions

mommy bloggers make. I will focus my analysis of mommy blogs on a generic description, in which a rhetorical critic analyzes artifacts in order to discover a genre by looking for similarities among a set of artifacts. These similarities include substantive features from content or stylistic features from form. These substantive and stylistic recurrent rhetorical actions formulate the organizing principles of a genre.

My guiding questions are: Does a genre exist among the top ten mommy blogs of 2012, and what are the characteristics of that genre? To answer these questions, I immersed myself in the top ten mommy blogs of 2012 as identified by *Babble*, a website created as a forum for all parents. *Babble* created the list through their editors and a group of parent bloggers. The process for choosing the top mommy blogs follows:

> First, we asked a diverse group of parent bloggers to come up with lists of their own favorite blogs, and the blogs they felt weren't getting the attention they deserved … [O]ur editors reviewed the nomination section from last year's top 50 list.… Then, when we had a good long list of very worthy mom blogs, we had an expert panel … review the list, add some suggestions of their own, and rank them all. (*Babble* para. 3)

The top ten blogs seem to represent what mommy blogging is all about, based on *Babble's* specific criteria, so the characteristics they share reveal the specific features of the genre of mommy blogging. I chose to use *Babble's* list for my analysis because of its explanation for the process of choosing the top blogs. Many "top" mommy blog lists are available online, but this one demonstrated transparency through explanation, and I chose it because *Babble* is well known for addressing parenting issues and for supporting and promoting mommy bloggers.

Mommy blogs are well matched to generic criticism because of their grouping as a blogging phenomenon. Using this already established recognition of the movement to gain insight into what actually differentiates this sort of blogging from other forms lends itself to generic criticism because of the way the theory identifies similarities. Finding commonalities among the top ten mommy bloggers will establish mommy blogging as a more defined genre and contribute to research on mommy blogs as an important cultural force and an extra-institutional form of professional communication. Defining what constitutes a mommy blog is an important part of establishing legitimacy and contributing to further research on motherhood. This article will first identify the common characteristics of the mommy blogging genre, as the first step of generic criticism is a description of the artifacts. Second, I will explain how these characteristics reveal and compose the organizing principles of the genre

as community and rebellion. Lastly, I will analyze and discuss the implications of the mommy blog genre's features.

Description of Artifacts

Because editors at *Babble* compiled data on the phenomenon, I relied on their list of the top ten mommy blogs of 2012 to perform my analysis and to narrow down my list of artifacts. The blogs are: *Girl's Gone Child* by Rebecca Woolf; *The Bloggess* by Jenny Lawson; *Her Bad Mother* by Catherine Connors; *Dooce* by Heather Armstrong; *Finslippy* by Alice Bradley; *Postpartum Progress* by Katherine Stone; *The Girl Who* by Monica Bielanko; *Confessions of a Pioneer Woman* by Ree Drummond; *Amalah* by Amy Corbett Storch; and *Sweet|Salty* by Kate Inglis.

Substantive Elements

Humor

The top ten mommy blogs use humor as a way to connect with their audiences. They often downplay traditional housewifery and make fun of it. *The Bloggess* and *Her Bad Mother* make fun of Pinterest, a website that has drawn many women because of its use as a forum for swapping recipes, decorating ideas, and parenting tips. Many of these bloggers are not enthusiastic about Pinterest. *The Girl Who* has an entire post titled, "Screw You, Pinterest."

Jenny Lawson of *The Bloggess* is particularly humorous. She features posts of her cat wearing wigs and a homemade Halloween costume made from an old stuffed animal. She also makes fun of herself. In one post, she told of meeting Tony Danza and how she related to him a particularly stupid story because of her nervousness. She wrote, "So now Tony Danza probably thinks I have emotional issues and that I collect dead ponies. And that is a sentence I never thought I'd write" ("Hold Me" para. 9). The purpose of the majority of her posts is to be witty and humorous.

This element echoes the trend in mothering memoirs over the last decade. Samira Kawash found in a brief overview and analysis of these memoirs that the authors "are funny and strong, but they are also angry: angry at the high standards, competitive parenting, and impossible expectations of mothering that make them feel guilty or like failures" (985). Friedman noted that this humor also provides a critical look at mother's experiences ("It Takes" 358). This leads to the next two substantive elements: anger and guilt.

Anger

Underneath the humor of the mommy blogs is anger. The bloggers seems to be reacting to "an essentialist view of motherhood: if mother-love and

self-sacrifice are the natural expressions of maternity, then anger, violence, and even the mildest acts involving choosing of one's own needs over those of the child are not only wrong but unnatural, even monstrous" (Kawash 983). Anger versus tenderness is a theme in Adrienne Rich's book on motherhood, *Of Woman Born*, an important foundational text for motherhood studies. Mommy bloggers seem to be expressing anger as a way of relieving the inevitable stress of motherhood. As Friedman noted, mothers wish to relieve stress and gain emotional support, but often do so through their children. "Only on the Internet can (some) mothers easily connect without needing the excuse of their children to provide community" ("It Takes" 356). The anger expressed in mommy blogs is an emotional release, one done without the interruptions of children or the excuse of a play date.

Katherine Stone's blog focuses completely on postpartum depression, often examining expressions of anger. In one post, a guest blogger expressed that postpartum depression is a thief and a liar. She wrote: "I've lost some of those things, but for a long time I felt as though my experience with postpartum depression had stolen one thing in particular from me: the family I had always envisioned" (Farr). She is angry about her situation, but this anger stems from the cultural context that reinforces perfect and/or ideal families. Her anger grapples with more than her own emotions; instead, she is engaging in a larger conversation about expectations and impositions that make it hard for women to enact motherhood realistically.

Other anger is directed at political and women's issues. Stone frequently expresses anger at poor media depictions of mothers and of depression. She's an activist, and anger is part of her activism. She wrote, "Nothing infuriates me like ignoring the facts. Presenting only one side of the story" ("The Harm" para. 1). She is constantly addressing her anger when it comes to misleading information about women's issues, particularly postpartum depression. In this, we see political activism through the personal experiences of women that are largely affected by culture, media, and politics.

Two of the top ten blogs focus their anger on their former religion, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Their disillusionment from religious experiences as children seems to connect them with their audience through identification. A good example of this anger mingled with humor is on the blog *Dooce*. Blogger Heather Armstrong tells a story about sitting next to a strange woman on an airplane and not wanting to be associated with her. She writes, "If anyone asks I'm just going to shrug and tell them that we're Mormon" ("All Pain" para. 2). It's pretty clear that many of these bloggers are angry, and this anger stems from multiple sources, including the cultural pressure of perfection on mothers. This rejection of perfection or ideals is a large part of mommy bloggers' anger.

While releasing this anger may be therapeutic and attempts to counter the isolation and pressure mothers may feel, Friedman acknowledged that "negative comments may generate angry posts, and angry posts will generate controversy and often increase a blogger's popularity. Insofar as popularity or readership is a measure of power, then, controversy is immensely powerful" (*Mommyblogs* 90). Anger might not always be about rebelling against cultural norms or empowering other mothers. It can instead serve bloggers as a way of gaining more power by creating more views and more shares on social media. Further research might examine how anger is used as blogging currency and in what ways anger is a ruse for click-bait, rather than a true reaction to the stresses and ambivalence of motherhood.

Guilt

The bloggers address the guilt commonly associated with motherhood, sharing feelings of inadequacy with their readers. They also address the guilt many women feel at not measuring up to popular images of the ideal mother. Yet the women, despite acknowledging guilt as part of the motherhood experience, also claim that being imperfect is acceptable. Part of acknowledging guilt is assuaging it. Rebecca Woolf of *Girl's Gone Child* addressed this when she said:

> No matter how much practice we have, how many births we survive, infants we care for, birthdays we celebrate, when it comes to children and relationships and pretty much everything else in life, we're all flying blind. We're all, no matter the what and the who and the how, first-time moms. ("Every Time" para. 7)

She expressed the ambivalence that is prevalent among mothers, which Brown contends is "also behind much of the guilt mothers feel about motherhood" (122).

The myth of perfect motherhood is perpetuated by the new momism. Susan Douglas and Meredith Michaels described new momism as "the insistence that no woman is truly complete or fulfilled unless she has kids, that women remain the best primary caretakers of children, and that to be a remotely decent mother, a woman has to devote her entire physical, psychological, emotional, and intellectual being, 24/7, to her children" (4). It is motherhood to the extreme, and because of this perfection promoted through culture and media, mothers inevitably feel guilty. This guilt played out on *Girl's Gone Child*. She focused a series of posts on the guilt she felt over not being the perfect mother when it came to her daughter's birthday party. The first post, titled "Making Plans," explains that she has done nothing to prepare. As a result, she said: "I feel guilt for being a terrible organizer. Guilt for not wanting to bake Fable a cake. Guilt for

wishing I could hire someone to do the whole thing for me. All fancy like the magazines. Guilt for thinking that those kinds of things matter in the first place" (para. 4). She seems to buy into the new momism, but rejects it at the same time. She cannot escape the guilt for not participating in what she perceives as good motherhood, and she cannot escape the guilt for realizing that her guilt is not warranted because it is a construct. She is participating in "intensive mothering, [in which] everyone watches us, we watch ourselves and other mothers, and we watch ourselves watching ourselves" (Douglas and Michaels 6). Both Woolf's perception of the situation and larger societal issues, such as new momism, create her guilt. Woolf also presents herself as a student who is failing an exam. She wrote, "I am coming close to mastering the art of being 'present' with my kids but I fail miserably at the 'planning' portion of the exam" ("Making Plans" para. 5). She sees motherhood as some sort of test, as a way to prove, as she later says, that she's "a human person" (para. 8). And her insistence on becoming an expert at "being there" for her children echoes themes of new momism, with the idea that mothers must be fully engaged with their children all of the time. Her guilt covers up all of the good that she does as a mother. She cannot move past it. In the discussion section of this article, I will analyze how readers responded to Woolf, showing that the guilt portrayed in mommy blogs can often lead to redemption through community.

Fame

The bloggers are acutely aware of their fame. Many of them have received free items from large companies (including washers and dryers) and have large sponsorships of their blogs, which is how the women are paid. Their consciousness of this fame is revealed in their biographical descriptions, in which they offer contact information but hesitate to make any sort of promise to respond. Woolf of *Girl's Gone Child* says: "[P]lease feel free to contact me … [I] have a PO Box that I'm terrible at checking because the line is always super long and the people who work there are super yelly" ("About" para. 4). She is telling her readers, in a nice way, that she probably will not respond because she is busy.

In a similar vein, Armstrong of *Dooce* wrote: "I have never been very good at returning email or phone calls for that matter. I get a lot of email so if I don't respond to yours please do not take it personally" ("Contact Me" para. 3). She realizes that she is too occupied to respond but does not want to alienate readers. She does, however, warn them against stalking. She wrote, after giving a physical address: "No, that is not my home address, so if you show up there you will not get to peek inside my windows" (para. 6). Fame is part of being a popular blogger, so she keeps her home address private and uses humor to joke about stalkers.

Lawson, addressed her fame (and its consequences) in a blog post about an interesting and anonymous present she received in the mail. She wrote: "Someone sent me a box of dead hamster in the mail *and I don't even know what that means*. Is it some sort of *code*? Is it a *threat*?" (emphasis in original, "Hello" para. 10). She's using the situation to be humorous, but she is also highlighting the problems that come with being well-known through her blog.

As part of this fame, the mommy bloggers use their sites to advertise their books and products. Eight of the ten bloggers have published books (both fiction and nonfiction), and the two that have not are professional writers for *Babble* (one of them is the editor-in-chief). The women use their blogs to advertise their books and their writing that appears elsewhere. Catherine Connors of *Her Bad Mother* wrote, "*TIME* named this blog to its list of the 25 best blogs of 2012. Which, yes, I am totally bragging about, because I can" ("A List" para. 1).

The Female Experience

The specific content among the blogs varies, but most of it centers around homemaking and the female experience. Writing for women in the workplace of the home has a rich history as a genre, including the work of nineteenth century domestic advisers in the United States "who wrote about the home (private sphere) [but] also remained connected to and interested in the social issues of their day (public sphere)" (Leavitt 18). Mommy bloggers' topics largely stay focused on the home and domesticity, but are also connected to the social issues that affect women. This includes topics such as recipes, parenting, menstruation, birth control, friendships, gardening, depression, clothing and style, rape, marriage, breastfeeding, crafting, documenting their children's activities, and housekeeping (or lack of it).

Many of the bloggers strive to be authentic or what they describe as "real." This authenticity reflects the idea "that providing an honest view of motherhood [means] including both the joyful and the painful experiences associated with mothering" (Brown 124). Mommy bloggers also engage in what Sarah Leavitt calls "uncovering the way certain women understood the connections between their homes and the larger world" (5). Mommy bloggers attempt to make sense of social issues by connecting the public and private spheres. They publicly address the issues that most affect women privately by writing from their perspective as mothers. Writing about the female experience encompasses both and relates to the next substantive element of loss.

Loss

Loss is a common theme, which may be related to the nature of life, but the bloggers focus on it as a way of connecting with their audiences. In particular, Kate Inglis of *Sweet|Salty* recounts the loss of one of her children: "I became

pregnant again, this time with identical twin boys. In May 2007 they were born three months early. One survived and one did not. . . [He] whispers to us every day" (para. 2). As a result of this loss, she started a group for babylost. Her blog is a place where women who have lost children can connect. Even the title of her blog reflects this theme. She wrote: "Why sweet | salty? Because that's what it is" (para. 5).

Additionally, the other women write about loss as well. Armstrong of *Dooce* became famous after blogging about her institutionalization for postpartum depression. During her treatment, "she gave [her husband] notes scribbled in longhand to type onto her blog. Two thousand readers wrote back. By the time she came home, her Web traffic had quadrupled" (Belkin para. 20). *Postpartum Progress* focuses specifically on this issue for women, one that coincides with a loss of identity during a transition into motherhood. Other mommy bloggers focus on the terminal illness of one of their children, the death of other people's children, or just missing their children when they are gone. This theme of loss creates identification with an audience, but it also reflects Rich's assertion that "only the willingness to share private and sometimes painful experience can enable women to create a collective description of the world which will truly be ours" (9). Sharing loss with other women can be an empowering and productive way of conversing.

Stylistic Elements

Photos

All of the blogs have photographs, particularly of their children. Ree Drummond of *Confessions of a Pioneer Woman* has older children, but she still includes photos of them with their friends. She also gives her readers the opportunity to feature their own pictures of their children. She calls this series YOUR [insert adjective: fabulous, incredible, fantastic] Mobile Phone Photos. Some of the bloggers include photos of their animals. These usually feature family pets, such as cats and dogs, but there are also photos of farm animals, particularly cows and horses. The photos of the children (and pets) serve to bond the blogger to her readers through their common characteristic of being mothers and caretakers. They enact Webb and Lee's summation of "personal blogs [as] more journal-like [that] feature disclosures of events occurring in daily life and informal photographs" (243). These photos may show the messiness and randomness of their lives, uniting and engaging readers as a community.

However, inclusion of children, whether through photos or storytelling, is problematic. Mommy bloggers have been called "exploitative and foolhardy" for exposing their children to the same fame they have sought (*Mommyblogs* 131). Issues of privacy for children are debated and many wonder how the

children of bloggers, especially those with the most fame, will react to their most embarrassing moments and childhood mistakes being online for everybody to witness, criticize, and judge. Photos then become a rhetorical device in this debate, and become part of the concern over exploitation and commercializing one's family members.

Events

The blog posts revolve around the rhythm of domestic life. The blogs are organized according to the seasons and cyclical happenings with children. Some examples are posts about getting the children off to school in the fall, posts celebrating the birthdays of children, posts announcing anniversaries, posts relating to upcoming holidays, and posts recounting family weddings. All of these posts organize the women's lives and show that their thoughts are directed by a domestic, Christian, Western calendar. This event-driven posting reflects the idea that "male domination in the political economy and the household is the driving force in family life" and reinforces "a dichotomous split between the public sphere of economic and political discourse and the private sphere of family and household responsibilities" (Collins 311). This is interesting because the women seem to be trying to buck some parts of patriarchy through discussing taboo topics and expressing anger, but their schedules at home still center around a patriarchal economic system.

However, from a different perspective, the event-driven posting can be said to "assign meaning to the stages and cycles of life that may otherwise be missed in their busy existence, if not chronicled" (Webb and Lee 246). Posting about events is also a way of chronicling the history of the domestic household and recognizing that what happens privately is worthy of recognition, discussion, connection, and analysis within that community. Not only are these mothers documenting the lives of their children, but they are documenting their own lives, giving voice to the work women have always done and that has always been forgotten in official narratives of history. This chronicling of the work women do in the home is unprecedented, and just might prove to be as radical as Alice Bradley of *Finslippy* declared it was in terms of remembering often-forgotten women (Webb and Lee 244). Twenty-first century women might be the first generation to have their voices and experiences preserved so carefully and specifically through this online medium.

Branding

Branding is an important part of success for a business; mommy bloggers are not an exception to this. They accomplish branding by focusing on one particular aspect of their expertise or lives. *Confessions of a Pioneer Woman's* brand has to do with her cooking (she has a show on the Food Network), although

she has other sections called photography, home and garden, homeschooling, and entertainment. Other bloggers focus on photography, dealing with depression, style and beauty advice, art, writing, or music. There are also many subcategories and a blurring of the lines of expertise.

Giveaways

Almost all of the top ten mommy blogs I examined have some form of prize-winning for their audiences. Some of the bloggers hold the commercial giveaway events more often than others, depending on the amount of money and sponsorships they have, but all of them encourage participation in the blogging community by hosting giveaways that require comments. These giveaways are usually sponsored and act as product endorsements for companies. There have been giveaways for diaper bags, kitchen knives, KitchenAid mixers, car seats, children's clothing, and baby products (such as bottles, pacifiers, and toothbrushes).

The one exception to this is *Sweet|Salty*. Author Kate Inglis has made it clear that she does not believe in giveaways because her blog is not about selling products for companies. Her "giveaways" come in the form of emotional support for women who have lost children. She seems to be aware of Friedman's observation of "the tensions between the desire for attention and adulation and the desire for authentic discourse and validation" (*Mommyblogs* 88). Inglis wants to focus on connecting with her readers and the serious problem of losing a child, rather than cheapening such discourse and connection with commercialization and advertising.

Sponsorship and commercialization of mommy blogs is a controversial issue, one that might lead to a mother's success and popularity through blogging, but it might also compromise the integrity of her writing. Friedman acknowledged, "Monetization is changing the style of 'women's writing': instead of the traditional (and arguably stereotypical) style that foregrounds intimate and personal knowledge, writers—women—are supplanting personal content with content calculated to generate revenue or free products from sponsors" (*Mommyblogs* 145). Such sponsorship might call into question the integrity of the blogger and the trust that readers can have in her posts, especially when the posts involve promoting a product. They become marketers rather than mommy bloggers, "without the platform of their own honest experiences as a background to the products under review" (145). Inglis seems to understand the problematic nature of advertising and sponsoring giveaways on her blog, which is dedicated to mothering through the loss of a child. Such marketing might cheapen her message and create a blog space that becomes unsafe to grieving mothers. The intimacy of her connection and conversation with readers would be lost through advertising for companies only interested in profit.

Ethos

Mommy bloggers establish ethos through their knowledge of motherhood from a learner's perspective. Having ethos usually denotes some sort of expertise, but it also means that one has the authority and the morality to speak on a particular topic. Mommy bloggers have developed this authoritative voice by being mothers, by writing honestly about that experience, and by presenting their lives realistically. They use interpersonal writing to reach a mass audience, revealing a human side of mothering, and therefore gaining credibility through identification. Friedman sees blogs as an easy way "for an increasingly wide range of people to assume an authorial voice" ("It Takes" 354).

Conversational Tone

The bloggers do not employ completely formal conventions in their writing. Many of them are professional writers and editors, and they follow good writing and use of standard language principles, but they do not attempt to alienate their readers with intellectual prowess. Instead, the bloggers seek identification through conversational writing that engages readers with any level of education. This is a rhetorical technique familiar to female writers of all eras. Elizabeth Tebeaux found that seventeenth century female technical writers in England, who focused on midwifery, education, and medicine, adopted "a conversational style … [as a] way of establishing a relationship with her readers" (112). These early technical writers "illustrate one important quality of women's technical writing: the sense that they are talking with their readers rather than simply providing objective, succinct information" (113). Mommy bloggers engage in this same quality of writing.

All of the bloggers are masters at engaging their audiences with this conversational tone, but one example is Monica Bielanko of *The Girl Who*. She wrote, "And while we're talking about grandma, let's just all go ahead and admit that most of our grandparents are still slightly racist. Using the adjective 'slightly' is probably being a little generous, even" ("Surviving" para. 3). This is just one example of the tone and use of creative language structure that engages blog readers on a casual and comfortable level. The substantive element of humor also serves this purpose. Friedman stated that more popular blogs (she used *Dooce* as an example) have gained "notoriety precisely *because* the version of maternity that they present is unmasked … they are far from politically docile" (emphasis in original, 359). Taking off masks and presenting an authentic voice on motherhood is part of this conversational tone.

Organizing Principles

The organizing principles of the genre are rebellion and community. The women approach many of their topics as rebels, addressing traditional stay-

home motherhood issues but admitting that they do not measure up. They do not fit an ideal image of motherhood, and even if their "failure" bothers them, they do not let it stop them from blogging, commenting on the tensions and ambivalence, and moving forward as mothers. More specifically, two of the top ten mommy bloggers focus on rejection of religion as their rebellion. Similarly, Woolf titled her blog *Girl's Gone Child*, reminiscent of going "wild." She sports tattoos and refers to her life as "crazy" on several occasions.

Another blogger seems to be the more typical, perfectly groomed, demure housewife, but her content focuses exclusively on postpartum depression, a topic that was somewhat taboo until a few years ago. She is rebelling by speaking out and addressing an issue that many women face but are embarrassed to admit they have experienced. This consciousness-raising—through the substantive features of humor, anger, guilt, fame, the female experience, and loss—works toward rebellion. In these rebellious attitudes, the admitted guilt, anger, or failure is usually followed by participation from their communities, the other organizing principle.

Mommy blogs, as all blogs, are community-based. The bloggers' photos, event-based posts, branding, giveaways, ethos, and conversational tone help to solidify this community of mothers. This community feeling is essential for mothers when facing some of the toughest parenting challenges. Friedman explained that, "the ability to create community independent of physical space is a tremendous boon….The virtual nature of the Internet means that child care is not required for participation" ("It Takes" 354). The women who participate in the communities that mommy blogs offer are involved in exploring mothering challenges by commenting on the bloggers' posts and giving her (and other readers) encouragement and advice. This encouragement serves to reinforce rebellion. The women reject stereotypical views of motherhood, and when they allow guilt, anger, resentment, depression, or loss to creep in and cause doubt, their communities pull them back into a rebellious mode, reminding them of their inspiration to others despite not being perfect.

Discussion and Analysis

The principles of rebellion and community are rhetorical choices meant to strengthen the community of mommy bloggers and to extend such support to their audience of mothers. Such content is a choice that "grow[s] out of knowledge (often tacit) of the values and conventions of communities" (Comprone 99). Therefore, the stylistic features, while seemingly spontaneous and agency-driven, feed off of each other. Blogs as a genre have emerged and evolved into important community sites where women express the realities of motherhood, but they have become sites of community and rebellion because

of the connectedness of their content and situations. As a genre and through rhetorical choices, mommy blogs are "constrained by genre and context of culture or situation" (99). Genre theorists "argue that rhetorical choices are the result of a writer's ability to manipulate linguistic and formal patterns that are passed on from one situation to another" (99). Because of the public nature and visibility of mommy blogs, their stylistic features and rhetorical choices are dependent on others within the community engaging in the same behavior and arriving at the same exigence.

What does this mean for motherhood? If the online forums in which women share their personal journeys through motherhood are organized by community and rebellion, we learn that motherhood is a fraught and ambivalent site for many women, at least those participating in this genre through writing a blog or reading one. We know ambivalence in mothering has been well documented (Brown; Rich), so what else do the principles of community and rebellion suggest?

Blogs are communities that offer support; however, because blogs are virtual communities, this support is mostly emotional. Friedman pointed out that blog community "provides tremendous solace and comfort to millions of mothers worldwide" ("It Takes" 352). Women certainly need the support of other women in order to successfully navigate the role of mother. These women cannot necessarily trade babysitting, meet at a park, or share a carpool. They can, however, talk about these issues the same way face-to-face mothers would, finding like-minded individuals who share their concerns and building a community based on typified situations within motherhood.

Mommy blogs as a genre then become a way of finding mothers facing similar "generic" constraints in the mothering experience. Those who have lost children find community on *Sweet|Salty*, while those who struggle with postpartum depression find a community at *Postpartum Progress*. Not only is the genre organized by the principle of community, but mothers tend to find that community among lines of genre as well. Too often, however, these similarities may be based on white, middle class, "patriarchal motherhood," but Friedman also acknowledged that unusual, diverse, and cross-cultural connections among women can occur (352, 359). However, Webb and Lee argue, "Mommy blogs were never developed to appeal to everyone but rather to fellow mothers in similar circumstances" (248).

Mommy blogs as a genre take into account the context of a situation. Joseph Comprone defined rhetoric "as focused on situation … [it] leads directly to an understanding of text making as essentially the dual act of comprehending the context of situation and developing strategies for managing textual production" (103). By accounting for context, mommy blogs develop strategies for mothers to manage their own contextual situations. Mommy blogs have

sprung up through what scholars call rhetorical exigence, which "causes a group of speakers, readers, and writers … to function as a social network and to produce texts that address each other within a consistent, systematic framework" (103). Such rhetorical action is a way of solving the problems and addressing the ambivalence present in the motherhood experience.

One specific example of community acting to address and assuage the guilt, ambivalence, and pressure of perfection in motherhood occurred on *Girl's Gone Child*. Previously, I outlined Woolf's guilt over not planning the perfect birthday party for her daughter. Follow-up blog posts to that expression of guilt led to redemption. First, Woolf responds to her own blog post with a post called "Screw a Plan." It features one picture of her daughter Fable presumably at her birthday party. She is flanked by children and is wearing a pink construction paper hat with sparkly letters that say "Fable." She wears a wide smile, with squinty eyes and pure joy radiating from her face. This photo has no caption, nor does it need one. It shows, through the rebellion, that having a planned birthday party does not matter, for Woolf's daughter is happy anyway. The results of the party serve as redemption for Woolf.

Second, Woolf's redemption comes through the community of blog comments and the willingness to rebel against idealistic motherhood. After the first post, in which Woolf denigrated herself for perceived failures, her blog followers rallied, using several rhetorical techniques to assuage her guilt. One commenter said:

> I love being present with my child, but when it comes to planning, I have a million great ideas … but struggle to ever make these ideas reality. I try to remind myself that my family would rather have me present than running around like a crazy lady … it's a struggle to convince myself that I'm not screwing this up. (Jenny H.)

This effort to connect creates identification and may have signaled to Woolf that her guilty thinking is flawed in some ways.

Another comment from onlyconnect said, "[A] refreshing change … from all the mommy blogs with 'themes' for their kid's birthday party … Moms are all different. Not everyone wants to do that, and if that's not thing [sic], you're no less of a mom." In a similar fashion, Kelly expressed admiration for Woolf by saying, "I'm in awe of your ability to parent in a way that makes your children feel secure and loved and supported." She explained that her mother had created picture-perfect planned parties; however, they do not have a meaningful connection with one another. She made the point that connecting with one's children does not require fancy parties, or, symbolically, living up to an ideal version of motherhood. Lastly, jen P wrote, "please son't [sic] beat yourself

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up for not being some '50s mythic super-mom type." All of these women, in their own way, are creating redemption for Woolf by downplaying her guilt and identifying with her anxiety.

They engage in feminine rhetoric, finding similarities and engaging in a community-level consciousness raising, to lead to enlightenment and redemption. We see that "identity can be influenced by the performance itself" (Webb and Lee 246). The bloggers, the readers, and all mothers can experience redemption through community by engaging in Woolf's performance of motherhood as it appears publicly. Friedman described this as a way for mothers to acknowledge community and shift "their own narratives in response. This response … emerges as the isolation of motherhood—especially non-normative motherhood—is interrupted by the virtue of the relationality of mommybloggers" (*Mommyblogs* 82). Woolf's series of blog posts is one example of redemption from isolation and guilt, and it shows at the individual level how community and rebellion as organizing principles function within the genre of mommy blogs.

This online rebellion for mothers through resisting norms and allowing themselves leeway is explained by Friedman as a result of the cyborg and the queer. First, the idea of cyborg is represented in the "Cyberfeminist Manifesto," which declared to be "rupturing the symbolic from within" (cited in *Mommy-blogs* 24). We see this through the way mommy bloggers vocalize guilt and anger, highlight domestic and maternal activities and rhythms as important and worthy of validation, speak openly about loss, and reject professional writing prescriptions in favor of motherhood ethos and connection with a lay audience through a conversational and humorous tone. Second, queer theory applies to mommy blogs because it is "an act of resistance" (26). It recognizes that individual subjects can be destabilized and that identity is performative and practiced (114). By viewing mommy blogs through these lenses, we see the possibilities for women to challenge norms and statuses that do not work in favor of their lived experience as mothers.

While ultimately these top ten mommy bloggers reinforce and live many norms of whiteness, heterosexuality, and patriarchy, they approach these issues in "ways that challenge or at least trouble in some way 'natural' and reliable notions" (*Mommyblogs* 116). They seem to recognize that motherhood is messy and contradictory, especially through inflexible social categories, and resist stereotypical representations of their lives, despite very much living the norms. They have "shifted [motherhood] from a starkly defined enterprise to one more open to contradiction and ambiguity" (118). They demand individual consideration for their experiences, even if others share those experiences or perspectives, because blogging as life writing acknowledges the uniqueness of the individual and her ability to find her own way while engaging in dialogue with others.

Mommy blogs additionally serve as a way of recognizing the work that

mothers do, as we know that when work is feminized or domestic, it is often discounted (Thompson and Rothschild; Kynell; Durack). Cynthia Haller wrote, in her analysis of North Carolina Canning Clubs from 1912-1916, "Reports of work, then, appear to play an important role in the politics of recognition" (283). Similarly, mommy blogs serve as reports of work, legitimizing the home as a workplace and highlighting the issues women face as worthy of discussion and organization. We know that blogging "provides validation" (Friedman, *Mommyblogs* 11). From this perspective, we not only recognize women's concerns, but we come to understand the depth of the work they do as mothers and just how complicated it can be in practice. Documenting that work then becomes important in recognizing mother work, and mommy blogs as a genre accomplish this legitimization.

Conclusion

The genre of mommy bloggers has specific substantive and stylistic characteristics that lead to the organizing principles of community and rebellion. The features I have identified may not explain or organize every mommy blog, for the genre is large and messy, but the blogs I examined give us a view of the features of mommy blogging and of what makes these bloggers successful. Status as a genre for mommy blogs opens up legitimacy in the blogging world, but also works to legitimize their status as writing and mothering professionals.

Motherhood is often a site of guilt because of cultural trends like new momism (Douglas and Michaels). However, mommy blogs serve as places of community and rebellion, where the bloggers, the readers, and all mothers (and parents) can experience connection through community and empowerment. This cycle reflects polyvocality, of which Kenneth Gergen wrote that "the boundary between author and reader is diminished," and "when the author speaks from experience I am likely to participate as an equal" (121). Women participate in a community that allows them to conceive of themselves in multiple ways and allows for identity building through rejection of norms and favoring of the individual lived experience. Mommy blogs are a genre that rebels against ideal forms of motherhood by revealing and promoting a more nuanced and multi-dimensional version of women's lives. Mommy blogs display the raw realities of parenting by diminishing boundaries and sharing experiences with readers.

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JAQUELINE MCLEOD ROGERS AND FIONA JOY GREEN

Mommy Blogging and Deliberative Dialogical Ethics

Being in the Ethical Moment

This article argues that while some mommy bloggers follow ethical practices in protecting the privacy of those they write about, others have given little thought to such self-regulation, leaving room and need for the dialogical blog-based forum proposed by the authors. Since mommy blogging takes family as its subject (and often family members who are dependent minors), confidentiality and privacy issues are particularly sensitive. Apart from an early effort to codify guidelines published on the BlogHer *website, there has been little blog-based or scholarly discussion of ethical blogging practices. Several examples of prominent mommy bloggers who disclose sensitive information about others without apparent privacy concerns for purposes of entertaining or informing their audience are documented. To conclude, the authors propose opening their blog—*Mommy Bloglines: Ta[l]king Care—*as a forum for interactive community discussion of evolving practices, with a goal of identifying some shared values amidst diversity.*

About four years ago, in 2011, we turned to the project of mommy blogging, collaborating from our perspective as two middle-aged, white, senior scholars and administrators teaching at an inner-city University in Winnipeg, Manitoba—one of us from the field of Rhetoric and Communication (Jaqueline) and one of us from Women's and Gender Studies (Fiona). As mothers of young adult children, we were interested in finding ways to connect our work to our outside identities and to use our own creative voices. We started our first blog, *Fluid Maternities*, intending to talk about our experiences raising young adult children in order to fill a gap we had observed when trying to find blogs by moms about their experiences with older children. At this point of entry, we did not expect to be overly guarded when sharing incidents of

family life and interactions with our children.

After several posts it became clear to us that talking about parenting our children was fraught with problems. Whereas Fiona was comfortable making public presentations about elements of her openly gay son's life, with his consent, she was quickly aware of censoring herself to protect his privacy on the blog. It is one situation to present research in controlled circumstances to in-person audiences, yet another to post on the Internet, making life details a matter of public record. Jaqueline also became concerned about the uncomfortable level of exposure involved in writing about parenting her daughters through the struggles of moving into their late teens and early twenties, whether telling about their accomplishments or problems with health or friends. It became clear that contextualizing the experience of an individual family member as a family situation made the story no less revelatory. Mommy blogging seemed less about self-reporting than about telling stories about others—really telling *on* them.

Nor was it helpful to tell ourselves our aim was service-oriented—to help or prepare others parenting young adult children. Telling any stories about interacting with our children seemed to involve not only trespassing on their rights to privacy but also stealing their stories, amounting to a writer's abuse of power. What if they saw our versions of their stories, and felt misunderstood or misrepresented? Perhaps worse, what if they started accepting the blogged version in place of their own, so that we were tampering with the pattern of their memories and even revising their lives? We both concluded that mommy blogging involved intimate revelations about others that seemed to encroach on privacy rights in disrespectful and even dangerous ways.

In our early investigation of an ethics of mommy blogging, three ethical areas came to the fore as more prominent than others: 1) the potential for corporate exploitation, 2) generic expectations governing truth telling and misrepresentation, and 3) the need to protect the privacy of subjects (particularly that of our children who are dependents and/or minors). Of course it is often difficult to tease apart the ethical pitfalls that arise from sponsorship exploitation, deliberate inauthenticity and privacy violations: seeking notoriety in hopes of engaging readership and sponsorship may lead one to exaggerate or even falsify lived experience, which in turn moves one away from thinking about how to portray people with fairness and dignity. The blog becomes its own reality show! Yet for the sake of conceptualizing the three areas, it is possible to differentiate them according to considerations of victims and harms. In the first case of corporate sponsorship, bloggers themselves may be the primary victims at risk of exploitation. In the second case when bloggers deliberately misrepresent themselves in their blogs, they may be taking advantage of the trust and expectations of their followers or readers. Finally, when bloggers tell about family members and people they know, they may be taking advantage of

subjects who have not given consent—who may not be of age to give consent.

We are intrigued by this third ethical tension because it can easily arise without a blogger being aware of it. Moreover, those who stand to be hurt by sensationalized and unauthorized disclosures are likely those the blogger cares about and hopes to celebrate or help. We are also concerned that damages may go beyond harming individual subjects. When subjects are treated like commodities, often processed into blogs against their will or knowledge, the larger project of mommy blogging and the community of mom bloggers may suffer. A difficult issue for all mommy bloggers—whether sponsored or not—is determining what is off limits to blogtalk. Being cautious about representing others is perhaps especially important to mommy bloggers whose reflections on life and lived experiences often centre on revealing details about intimate others and are circulated to readers as exemplary forms of advice.

As researchers, we do not to intend to set ourselves up as ethical arbiters but to examine community practices and engage mommy bloggers in dialogues about online privacy and disclosure. To foster such dialogue by providing a welcoming platform, we transitioned from a blog site to a web site, *Mommy Blog Lines: Ta[l]king Care* . We are still in the process of developing this site, looking for strategies to attract bloggers to join a conversation about blogging practices of withholding or sharing stories and images involving their children. One of the purposes of this paper is to announce that our blog site is open to the mommy blogging community as space for interactive discussion about privacy practices. Ultimately what we are looking for is not a hard and fast manifesto but better blogging practices based on deliberative and dialogical ethics—reflexive practices that encourage self-examination and allow some space for diversity of opinion and approach. As feminist researchers, we are committed to developing a dialogical partnership with the community. Our hope is that community reflection will lead mommy bloggers and readers to become more aware of ethical considerations that affect how we treat public and private matters.

Our commitment to developing community-based ethics that are situation-sensitive resonates with recent theory that describes the mamasphere as open and flexible, more a moment where reader and writer meet than an artifact (Friedman, 74-75). In connecting mommy blogs to the changing face of motherhood, May Friedman envisions the mamasphere as a location within cyberspace that can allow for fluid identity. Her analysis builds on some of the positive elements in Donna Haraway's predictions about the liberatory power available with "a merging of body and technology" (99). For Friedman, the mamasphere offers a space for exploratory thinking and alternative identities, a forum for redefining "motherhood, the relationships between mothers, the relationships between mothers and their children, and the maternal subject

position" (153). It mediates the differences between writer and reader without attempting to "arrive at a conclusion … to find 'the answer'": "The mamasphere is, instead, about never-ending questions and an ongoing discussion" (75). Ethics can likewise be conceived as moments for reflective practice rather than as rules. The blog we propose would both respond and contribute to the fluidity of the mamasphere by opening more channels for thinking about the ecology or networked nature of talking about our lives on line, about the levels of trust we should place on our readers, as well as about the connections and disjunctions between the virtual world and the real world practices.

We begin this discussion of the ethics of mommy blogging by defining the key terms, first examining how "mommy blogging" is understood, evolving, and best applied. We then explore "ethics" in relation to communication and privacy and consider the explanatory power of several ethical approaches in relation to mommy blogging practices of personal disclosure. Finally, we look at why mommy blogging is vulnerable to ethical slips, particularly to exposé of self and family. We review the case and influence of several high profile bloggers who model a lack of concern for the privacy of others and who set a tone that tends to celebrate "say what you will" self-expression. We conclude by considering the particular exigencies motivating mommy bloggers to exercise reflection and restraint in talking about their families on line, primary of which is the need for mommy bloggers to observe and protect children's rights.

Where Mommy Blogging and Ethics Collide

The term "mommy blogging" is contested by some (Bon; Bradley; Connors, "Meter" 92; Mohanraj). A blog in 2006 critiqued the unfairness of the term being "thrown out as a comprehensive put-down" (Tracey Goughran-Perez, qtd. in Friedman and Calixte 24) to refer to any blogs that were badly written and self-indulgent, noting that using the term in this way revealed ongoing assumptions about the second rate status of women and motherhood in society (Bon; Bradley; Mohanraj). Blogger Catherine Connors identifies the element of controversy as internal to the mommy blogging community, arising because "some believe it to exclude mothers who do not identify as 'mommies'" and see it as being used as a licence to pursue personal interests (92). By 2009, May Friedman and Shana Calixte called mommy blogging "a radical act" and referred to participating in a mounting "reclamation of the term" (25). In their edited collection *Mothering and Blogging: The Radical Act of the Mommyblog*, they extol the virtues of how mothers use blogs for networks and share experiential wisdom in the abandonment of relying on traditional "experts."

In a more recent 2013 book-length publication, *Mommy Blogs and the Chang-*

ing Face of Motherhood, May Friedman revisits and extends the argument to position mommy blogging not only as a conduit for networking that interrupts unhealthy silence and isolation, but also as a space for building communities that are healthy and diverse. When mothers are able to talk about what they do and to solve problems from within their own community, they develop not only a sense of personal identity but also a sense of their own expertise and community membership. Mommy blogging serves as a force that pushes back against dominant and restrictive discourses of motherhood to move "beyond rigid constructions of motherhood towards a more complicated and manifold subjectivity" (28). There is liberatory power in mommy blogging by putting "forth a version of motherhood more honest and raw than any representation of motherhood found elsewhere" (Freidman and Calixte 22).

In Friedman's analysis, women are no longer isolated individuals defined by cultural values, but participate in narrating a collective identity, whose members participate by contributing resonant personal stories. The purpose of the writing and reading mommy blogging network is to expansively explore the act of mothering—participants move, she says, "from mother to mothering. Both project and identity are collectivist, and thus they participate in destabilizing an individualist version of maternal subjectivity that in past years and culture defined and disempowered women" (152).

Apart from extending the argument that writing mothers no longer feel alone or powerless in a predefined role, Friedman explores the argument that blogging mothers connect to others to form an inclusive and diverse collectivity. Addressing the concerns that mommy bloggers conform "to the mythical norm of middle-class, heterosexual, married, and white motherhood" (147), Friedman argues that the mamasphere is capable of overcoming the presumption that mothers are white and middle-class, "a presumption that pervades the institution of motherhood itself," a presumption that rests on "the perceived racelessness of white mothers" (148). The networks and communities she describes are a hybrid that update the platitude that it takes a village to raise a child by proposing instead "the creation of an alternate village model that does not require mothers to always agree, that resists the need for ground rules and instead embraces chaos and laughter, loud fervent conversation, and noisy battles" (153). If corporatization privileges "the mythical norm of middle-class, heterosexual, married, and white motherhood," Friedman observes that the mamasphere is more diverse although "not clearly representatively so" (147). The communities she describes, taking shape in "the cyborg margins," are thus transgressive and even transformative, bringing together "mothers of children with disabilities, trans-mothers, non-English-speaking mothers, single mothers, mothers of colour, and every other mother whose experiences is not already documented in commercials, parenting magazines, and subway

advertisements" (148). Quite unlike Connors avocation of a community turned in and against itself, the mommy blogging community Friedman envisions is expansive, diverse and bravely communicative.

This debate energizes the term "mommy blogging" and suggests that there are important stakes involved. At its most basic, mommy blogging denotes a communication situation that involves a mother writing about some aspect of her relationship with her children. The website *Mashable* uses a similar pragmatic approach to define a "mom blog" as generated by "women who have at least one child in their household and have read or contributed to a blog in the last 30 days" (Laird). This basic definition is helpful to a discussion of ethics because it establishes that the writer takes as her subject not only herself, but also (at least by implication) her children. With this resonance factor, when ethical violations occur, there are seldom single victims but entire families are put at risk. Yet, if we accept Friedman's claims that mommy bloggers form a collectivity engaged in the shared project of redefining mothering, then it is also true that ethical mistakes have the potential to harm not only the individuals involved but also the broader mommy blogging community. An ethical gaffe is not an isolated personal self-promotional misstep in the way that Connors was trying to convey, but damaging to the development and ethos of the collective. If mommy blogging has the vibrant and revisionary potential that Friedman envisions, then an ethical review of community practices is timely. Asking members of the mommy blogging community to reflect on their practices ensures the participatory element of this review.

The Development of Privacy Ethics in Mommy Blogging

We understand our project of examining ethics in relation to "mommy blogging"—blogging about children and family—as an ongoing process aimed at identifying areas of ethical tension, especially those identified by community members who are prepared to enter into an online dialogue about ethical practices. In this section we will review some recent ways women have taken the lead in attempting to regulate the climate of debate and dialogue—whether through lists or essentialist theorizing about moral character—and we will also introduce vocabulary to guide ethical considerations beyond these approaches.

Although bloggers have generated a variety of lists to guide internet civility, implying that ethical practice is a straightforward matter of following a short set of rules, many philosophers of ethics and communications scholars have observed that ethics governing internet communications remain unresolved and emergent, for we are still in a "learn-as-you-go" stage (Christians, Jonas, and Madau). It is more literally descriptive than metaphorical to refer to the virtual spaces of the blogosphere and social media as "the wild west,"

evoking an untamed frontier where everyone must look out for themselves. For example, "The Wild West of Journalistic (and Blogistic) Ethics"—a blog from thetrialwarrior.com about law and justice—examines how laws have not kept up with online practices surrounding issues of "publishing defamatory statements online, or … hyperlinking to a story or comment that is otherwise defamatory."

The mommy blogging community was one of the first to make a strong gesture in the direction of invoking ethical communication standards. In 2006, in association with BlogHer, the community published a set of standards to promote online civility, and defines "unacceptable content as anything included or linked that is:

•Being used to abuse, harass, stalk or threaten a person or persons;
•Libelous, defamatory, knowingly false or misrepresents another person; Infringes upon any copyright, trademark, trade secret or patent of any third party. (If you quote or excerpt someone's content, it is your responsibility to provide proper attribution to the original author. For a clear definition of proper attribution and fair use, please see The Electronic Frontier Foundation's Legal Guide for Bloggers at http://www.eff.org/bloggers/lg;
•Violates any obligation of confidentiality;
•Violates the privacy, publicity, moral or any other right of any third party;
•Contains editorial content that has been commissioned and paid for by a third party, (either cash or goods in barter), and/or contains paid advertising links and/or SPAM or "Stupid Pointless Annoying Messages." For BlogHer's purposes, we define SPAM as anything that qualifies as nonsense unrelated to the discussion, either in comments on a blog or in our forums. This nonsense may take classic forms (e.g., simple links to unrelated content that are often advertising or e-commerce), or more insidious forms.

In taking aim at "unacceptable" content, BlogHer authors acknowledged the permeability of this category and made provision for assessing complaints on a case-by-case basis. BlogHer co-founder Lisa Stone defends the efficacy of the standards for governing site-specific and community communication practices when she stated that by 2006 BlogHer "became the schoolmarms of the Internet." Yet she denies that these standards where ever intended for broad use, and says that BlogHer had "no desire to impose its guidelines on the entire Internet … nor a universal standard" (qtd. in Lasica, np.).

Sanctioned or not, these BlogHer guidelines were used by social media guru

Tim O'Reilly in 2007 to create his notorious code of conduct, which when applied, he suggested would ensure a code of civility. This codified approach may encourage more respectful interaction, yet is limited because it rigidifies and universalizes a process that needs to be fluid, responsive and particular. It also models a top down process rather than one of community engagement by giving out pre-formed rules to regulate participants. As J. D. Lasica, social media expert, observes, the development of standards is subject to resistance and the imposition of standards requires that they be applied to a well-defined and limited audience and that they be subject to ongoing review and revision.

Another strand of thinking about ethics advocates for an overall way of being or a particular orientation to problem solving, rather than imparting a list of standards. The ethics of care developed by Nel Noddings and Carole Gilligan in the late 1980s imagined women to be concerned with fostering relationships and maintaining the welfare of others above satisfying their own needs. More recently, the essentialist problems with this approach have been critiqued—for example Daryl Koehn devotes a chapter to critiquing the ethical primacy of caring for others although she maintains an appreciation for their dialogical approach (20-52). In a similar vein, Elisabeth Porter argues for the need to integrate interest in justice with care to make women active moral agents and overcome dualism (21).

Instead of advocating for lists or for putting others ahead of ourselves in principle, we are interested in framing the question as one of power and rights. Mothers as writers have a right to express themselves and give voice to lived experiences; at the same time, they need to think of the confidentiality rights of others who are part of their narratives. This is not an entirely new question, but one that has weighed on fiction writers who stray too close to fact, or perhaps even more to memoirists who tell about others in telling about themselves. As Maxine Hong Kingston says in a short story that records how she imagines her aunt's suicide in "China Women," when we tell about others we may do so as a gesture of respect, yet there are nonetheless elements of exploitation and exposure, so that she admits with some guilt that she is "telling on her" (15).

There is no set of guidelines to govern what can be said of others, so it is important that the writer acknowledges that the person wielding the pen assumes a powerful role. Writer and teacher Bronwyn T. Williams points out that there is no single solution or transposable matrix to guide writers in determining the balance to strike between real life and plot details in the creation of fictional and non-fictional narratives. Whether writing a blog, or another narrative form, writers might temper their decisions about inclusion and exposure by reflecting on Williams' concerns about the power of the writer and the relative powerlessness of those she or he animates in text:

family stories belong to all members of a family. It is only the writer, however, who gets to define those stories—even the stories that are true—in print for an audience of strangers to see. It is only the writer who decides which stories that larger audience "deserves" to hear. And, if those who don't do the writing are more afraid of the "truth" that appears in print it is, perhaps, a well-founded fear. They know that they will not have the power or opportunity to respond, to present their stories. (299)

To support the serious and lonely work of reflective practice, we are proposing a dialogic approach that puts mommy bloggers in contact with each other, discussing choices and boundaries. We want to think through the responsibilities particular to mommy bloggers that are attached to writing about loved ones, many of whom are dependents and/or minors. Because mommy bloggers choose to investigate and memorialize intimate interpersonal relations, they have moved by choice into territory fraught with ethical questions about the rights and feelings of self and others.

There is limited published scholarship specifically linking mommy blogging and ethics. Emily January Petersen in a recent publication expressing the belief that blogging is a positive way to professionalize motherhood, touches on ethics as one of four components. Drawn from Brenton Faber's theory of professionalism that "distinguishes between professional and occupational writing" (4): these four elements include: relationship with audience, social responsibility, ethical awareness, and redefining the workplace (Petersen, 7). In her commitment to making the argument that blogging is a positive development that professionalizes motherhood, Petersen elides the question of whether sharing with others in an attempted act of social responsibility may unintentionally devolve into an ethical lapse. By Faber's definition, ethical awareness requires "professionals exhibit a critical awareness of their own activities" (314). Yet, Petersen limits this awareness to matters of avoiding deceit and controversy—presumably unethical for stirring up unnecessary dissent.

Another essay published by Melissa Camara Wilkins promises to address "the question of content" (152). Wilkins claims to have moved away from the antics of her children to look instead at her own role as mother and issues of mothering. To say that mommy blogs are about the writer herself and motherhood issues is to solve the ethical dilemma that comes of writing about others. Yet, making this claim is not entirely convincing; it is like saying one will talk about good teaching without ever mentioning students. By the end of her essay, Wilkins concedes that it will be impossible to abandon writing about her children, conceding that "occasional posts devoted to the children's silliness and sweetness will still appear" (156). Rather than saying that she

cannot tell their stories anymore because they are not her own, her approach instead is to say that she's interested in her own story first, that her children will have to cultivate a similar writing interest if they wish to star in a blog and that they will only enter her blog if there's room. As she claims, "it is my blog, after all" (156).

There is a wide body of literature about communications and ethics. As Ronald Arnett, Janie Harden Fritz, and Leeanne Bell point out in presenting current thinking about ethics in communications, we live in an age of diversity when it is unlikely for opinions about what is right and good to coalesce. Yet to be ethical in our minimalist era necessitates assuming responsibility for learning about and listening to others: "Acknowledging that our learning requires a dialogic openness to listening to another's point of view opens a space for finding common ground" (17). They cite the case Sessela Bok makes for taking a pragmatic view of communication ethics, which holds that "a given community [should] locate minimal virtues that permit life together to continue, despite disagreement" (18). In Bok's view, these minimal virtues become common sense for the local community, without reaching for any level of universality. Relating this pragmatic approach to our enterprise reminds us that such minimal standards of good practices that may emerge for the mommy blogging community cannot be expected to last or to fit other groups, certainly not without effort or thoughtful adjustments. Whatever standards may emerge as shared are thus contextual and provisional.

Apart from appealing to mommy bloggers to join a discussion about ethical practices as a way to constitute community identity, we believe that they will be drawn to participate as a way to cultivate their own ethos and identity. If we offer a definition of mommy blogging as a communicative act, then it de-emphasizes its being understood solely as a form of self-expression. Arnett, Fritz and Bell make the point that the opposite of communication that links us to others is narcissistic self-expression that keeps us turned in on self: "Humans need to interact with others to learn from them. We do not give ourselves identity; we inherit our identities from others"(17). Most of the mommy bloggers we have spoken with so far express the hope of writing for others and are, in turn, interested in reading others' lives. We believe they would welcome membership in an interactive conversation about ethics as a way of feeling further connected to a community of writers.

A final reason in support of mommy bloggers taking part in a discussion of ethics is more theoretical than persuasive, having to do with a philosophical implication of post-modern life. For many of us, values do not arise from a faith-based framework outside human experience but emerge from within ourselves, from within the individual. This reliance on human and personal experience to determine belief and guide action further strengthens the call to

listen to how others account for experience, so that there is a form of public interaction and negotiation to cultivate shared ground.

The sort of ethics we are interested in, then, cannot be set down as a set of universal rules, but will arise from communication within the community, as we find common ground in the expression of individual ideas and practices. Many mommy bloggers claim to turn to blogging to escape isolation and to find a virtual community. We believe that the prospect of joining a virtual community and abandoning a position of maverick narcissism will have wide appeal. Moreover, the mommy blogging community is distinctive in being devoted to talking about vulnerable intimacies; yet it is not to avoid harming themselves or others that they should take up questions of good practice, not a reactionary move to dodge harm or blame. Mommy bloggers are likely to be drawn into conversation about blogging on the basis of promoting a united and flexible understanding about common sense and respect in community.

Where Ethics and Mommy Blogging Collide: Blogging Problems and Media Flare-ups

Some bloggers are mindful of the power of their words. They implement strategies to guide their behaviour and provide a non-didactic model to encourage readers and other bloggers to cultivate non-narcissistic communicative tactics such as restraint, creativity, irony, and reflective intellect. Conversely, others are saying what they like under the guise of innocence and good-humoured fun. A problem arises, however, if they are disclosing information about themselves and those close to them without reflecting on the potential harms or risks of such disclosure.

Related to this is that such extroverted bloggers may exert influence on the tone of the mamasphere and encourage reckless disclosure in the name of humour and healing. We have attended two blogging conferences where well-known mommy bloggers cultivate self-dramatizing personas and regale the audience with personal stories about awkward situations that feature a cast of family members, whose extreme and odd behaviour is recounted for the sake of humor. Well known mommy blogger, journalist and 2012 Goodreads Choice Awards Best Humor winner for *Let's Pretend This Never Happened: A Mostly True Memoir,* Jenny Lawson, for instance, attempts to present herself in stand-up comedian fashion and reveals so much about her persona that there seems to be no areas untouched. At one presentation when asked directly about her style online and at conferences, she noted that she is playing a role and that this persona is only part of her full identity (Lawson, "In conversation"). Yet, mommy blogging readers and audience members who are not privy to the discrimination she makes about identity

performance are likely to see her as a role model and deduce that it is safe to behave in a similar fashion.

Another successful blogger, Tanis Miller (whose self-describes her blog as "a humorous and insightful look at the joys of parenting, the delights of marriage and the heartbreak of losing a child") adopted a similar stance and tell-all persona—judging by her blog content and by her performance on a panel at BlogHer 2012. For example, at the conference she gleefully told an audience of about 75 bloggers about the consequences of writing about a pinworm outbreak in her home affecting her children; her blog story lead to one of her children being confronted by classmates at recess time mockingly dragging their bums around the school grounds. At the panel presentation she took credit for learning there are implications to what she says online, yet maintained that her children should nevertheless have an inherent trust that what she writes won't harm them. While she believes she has learned by experience about ethical behaviour and consequences, she does not recognize the irony of coming to safe practices through bad ones. Judging from audience members who were amused by or supportive of her position, we speculate that other bloggers learn what they will or will not blog about through situations that have arisen through their blogging mistakes ("Mom, stop blogging about me").

Apart from following the lead of popular bloggers, there are other conditions that encourage writers to follow a path of sensationalizing the lives they tell. In general, the search for popularity, traffic and even notoriety might be an incentive to embellish personal stories and reveal secrets about the lives of family members, even though these details become embedded in the internet archives. There may be something of a slippery slope effect to adopting a tell-all stance. Bloggers may move from self-reflection to self-dramatization to create fictionalized worlds. It was fiction rather than reality that Judith Stadtman Tucker—a writer and activist offering online resources on motherhood as a social issue—claims to encounter as a reader of mommy blogs. She was surprised to discover that she felt like she was "lurking," visiting fictional worlds in which she felt more like an "interloper" than a reader and called for mommy blogs to become more authentic: "I want to see the lives of other mothers as real and full of meaning" (15).

There is loss of authenticity when blogs resemble fiction more than diary or memoir. A reader like Tucker feels the inauthenticity and disconnection. At risk for writers is that they are no longer using the blog to explore motherhood and reach out to the mothering community, but are drawn into an escalating fictional self-expression. At stake is the genre of mommy blogging itself. As we learned from the publishing ordeal of James Frey, there is nothing wrong with telling a fictional story if we are honest about the type of story being told, yet readers feel cheated if a fiction is called reality. In terms of ethics, if

one is telling a fictional story there is no particular onus to protect anyone. On the other hand, if one is writing about actual experiences of mothering and family members, there is a need for ethical awareness and honouring the privacy of others.

Apart from affecting the reading and writing lives of individual bloggers, issues of oversharing the details of a child's private life in mommy blogs or other forms of social media flare up from time to time in the media, particularly in reaction to blogs in which moms deal with children's health problems. Moms who take on the role of documenting their child's struggle with disease or illness usually go beyond defending their right to write and refer instead to fulfilling a sense of public mission. They refer to the needs of a readership of other parents going through similar challenges with sick children and offer their experience and insight as a helpful resource and moral support. To use Catherine Connors' colourful phrase, they are "giving good blog" if they are writing for the public good, "to tell stories that support or promote causes that are important to me—to continue to speak narrative truth to power" ("Give good blog").

Yet as the following two examples indicate, there is an odd self-serving tone to posts dedicated to this activist commitment of "telling truth to power." Certainly members of the mommy blogging community are on record for criticizing socially-minded blogs that have a disingenuous character. If there is enough online furor, traditional media often publish and exaggerate these controversies, fanning antagonisms and finding fodder for continuing mommy wars.

Beginning around January 2013, for example, wide public controversy began building around our first example of a blogger who used her child as the subject. Liza Long wrote a blog, "I am Adam Lanza's Mother," that went viral and put her on record for making a comparison between her 13-year old son and the 20-year old Adam Lanza, who killed 26 people in Newton, Connecticut. She painted the graphic details of her son's outbursts: "I live with a son who is mentally ill. I love my son. But he terrifies me. A few weeks ago, Michael pulled a knife and threatened to kill me and then himself after I asked him to return his overdue library books. His seven- and nine-year-old siblings knew the safety plan—they ran to the car and locked the doors before I even asked them to" (Long, "I am Adam Lanza's Mother").

Although Long's claim that she and her children have suffered and have something to share may be true, at the same time from her son's perspective, such a portrait written by his mother is likely difficult to accept—even potentially damaging. Yet equally troublesome is that once such information is entrenched on the internet, it becomes a matter of permanent public record, likely to have a negative impact not only on his current personal and social life, but also on his adult life. Rather than protecting her child from Internet

exposure as parents are encouraged to do by media experts, Long has chosen in her post to expose his darkest side and moments to the world. While she did not use her son's name in a gesture toward anonymity, her post included his photo and was written in her own name, so his identity is clear to those who do some investigating.

After her post went viral, it provoked media attention and controversy. In a blog critiquing Long's right to expose her child's behavior and illness to internet scrutiny, blogger Sarah Kendzior, who refers to herself as a children's rights advocate and scholar, says: "To reveal the personal struggles of a mentally ill minor online—in particular—to paint him as unstable and violent—is a form of child abuse" ("A child's right to privacy on line"). She points out that the privacy problem in mommy blogging is urgent from a rights' perspective, particularly because it arises in relation to bloggers revealing details about the lives of dependent minors. Long and Kendzior ultimately made public peace, going on record together to oppose what they recognized as the media manipulation that had fanned a mommy war between them (Kendzior, "A joint statement"). Yet, neither the controversy nor the peace pact deterred Long from continuing to tell her son's story. She became a media celebrity advocating for more support for parents with children who have mental illness. Giving a TED talk, and making appearances on shows such as "Dr. Oz," she went into the details of her son's problems, doing so, she says, to alert audiences about warning signs of mental illness and problem behavior.

Apart from becoming a well-paid public speaker, she published a book about her son in fall 2014, *The Price of Silence*. Reviewing the publication, *People Magazine* interviewed her son, asking for his opinion about his mother's public presentation in print of his struggles. He responded by affirming he was glad she might help others but in answer to whether he was glad that she told his story, he deferred. Here is the rather heartbreaking interview passage in full:

Michael has mixed feelings about his mom's outspokenness. "I really wish my mom hadn't come forward," he admits. "I also really wish others would because it sure has caused a lot of pain and suffering for our family, but I'm pretty sure it has helped a lot of others." Asked what he'd like people to know, he says, "I'm not a bad kid. With treatment, I am not that different from anyone else except for the fact I've grown up without friends." And that's his hope now that he's started high school. "I'd like to make two or three new friends," he says (McNeil).

His response captures the dilemma we want mommy bloggers to attend to: Long's actions may have a positive social outcome—may draw individuals into a helping and educative community—yet this good is achieved at the expense of her son's desire for and right to privacy. From what he says, it has also cost him the support of his siblings and ability to make and keep friends.

In essence, his community dwindles as he becomes the key figure his mother uses to educate her growing audience.

In another example, also in the name of doing social good, well-known blogger Catherine Connors (of the blog *Her Bad Mother*) made raising money for a sick child one of the main features of her blog. There is a link on her blog called "Tanner" that provides a photo and description of her nephew (Tanner), whom she identifies as a victim of Muscular Dystrophy. Beyond helping others to cope with the difficulties of suffering from similar illness, she has taken a more aggressively proactive stance of raising money for the boy and his family, by mounting a fundraising campaign she called "Tutus for Tanner." While there is no question that the blog accomplished practical good, we question whether Connors went too far in providing details about the challenges of Tanner's situation. In a passage close to his photo, for example, her opening statement is "This is Tanner … He's dying." She also states that it is important to raise money to help him maintain a comfortable way of life, noting that at this point he remains oblivious to how his life will be materially distressed by the disease. If he were to discover her blog, his comfort would be shattered because she spells out that he is facing not only death, but also physical and mental decline and anguish.

After the campaign, Connors goes close to silent on the boy's life and medical condition. She claims that the story is too heartbreaking for her to continue reporting. Perhaps more interesting is that she eventually acknowledges in writing about Tanner that she needs to leave him alone with his story—she says that he has hit an age where he wants to be in control of his own narrative. This is her phrasing: "Tanner is becoming more and more the owner of his own story, and more and more concerned to keep it his own, for as long as he has it. Even as his body fails, his mind and spirit move forward—now, into adolescence, with all of its exquisite sensitivities and anxieties—and you know how you didn't want anyone to even look at you when you were twelve?" ("The Heart is the Strongest Muscle, Mostly"). Her phrasing capturing his precarious hold on life seems insensitive, at best. She never reflects on whether he has seen or might see her references to the gravity of his condition. She never takes up as an issue for discussion at what age a child deserves to have privacy or perhaps more important how age in any way factors into the question of child privacy. Her portrait of this young boy's struggle may have been well intended and may have raised money to support him, yet in putting his grim prognosis in writing she violates any attempts other adults may have made to shelter him.

Despite blog posts that combine indiscretion and entitlement, Catherine Connors achieved popular blogger status in Canada, although her popularity was eventually contested by a group of dissenters spoke out on GOMI (Get Off My Internets). They criticized her flawed integrity, which they say she

demonstrated by abandoning her mommy blog to take a lucrative position promoting Disney products. It is sadly ironic that a blogger who entered the mommy blogging world claiming to be concerned about social justice and education eventually left it to a chorus of detractors who consider her more of an opportunist than activist. When it was recently announced that she was removed, or resigned from her position at Disney, the internet again lit up with criticism about her.

We learn from these examples that mommy blogging is not always productive of drawing mothers together in a way that builds and educates community. Both bloggers Long and Connors make intimate revelations about minors under the auspices of being socially minded, yet in both cases there is evidence of mixed motives. Each blogger has showcased the dire predicament of a child on blogs that have been their springboard to celebrity, career advancement, and financial gains.

Moving Toward Best Blogging Practices

Family and children are the natural subject of mommy blogs, and for this reason mommy bloggers—always poised to tell about others, often dependent minors—have deep investment in taking up the question of what constitutes safe sharing in online writing. Some bloggers from inside the community have put forward what amounts to a "Just say no" position about matters of disclosure. For example, Sharon Greenthal—a former stay-at-home mom and blogger at *Empty House, Full Mind*—wrote "A Letter To Mommy Bloggers From A Blogger With Grown Kids" to discourage mommy bloggers from posting photos and writing about their children's "ugly moments." She warns that young children, whose little lives are used to create content for blogs, "are going to grow up and develop identities separate from" their mothers. While her counsel may be wise and learned through experience and reflection now that hers is an "empty house," it is unlikely that dictating self-censorship as a policy for handling personal privacy decisions will be influential and effective amongst mommy bloggers who are enjoying the benefits of a network of sharing.

On the other hand, an interactive forum could offer a place for engagement, productive discussion about ethics, and lead toward more reflective blogging practices. Clearly, online privacy practices are currently multiple and contested. Our understanding of what is public is undergoing a sea change, as our collective culture moves into online sharing. As social media scholar Dana Boyd observes, privacy is "a practice and a process, an idealized state of being, to be actively negotiated in an effort to have agency" (np). In opening our blog to be a forum for such deliberative negotiation, we are not asking members of the mommy blogging community to follow any given regime or to give

up self-expressive and community building practices, but instead to engage in an interactive and ongoing community conversation about online privacy to promote more reflective practice and safer sharing online. In introducing *Mothering and Blogging*, Friedman and Calixte point out that for blogging to be a "radical act"—a way to redefine gender and mothering in unmarked virtual space—it's time to "move beyond blogging as an individualistic pursuit" (31). Our project advocates for an interactive and collective "mamasphere" in place bloggers working alone, in isolation and removed from community.

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AIDAN MOIR

Branding the Bump

Mediating Motherhood and Celebrity Culture in Popular Media

Consumer capitalism has created new demands for celebrity culture. Celebrities are expected to develop a brand identity to help maintain relevancy in a tabloid culture that privileges novelty. Such industry changes have resulted in numerous celebrity mothers commodifying their maternal identity into profitable lifestyle brands. This process, however, is not viable for all celebrity mothers who already possess distinctive personas in popular culture. Following the success of the Sex and the City *franchise, Sarah Jessica Parker transformed her celebrity into a fashion lifestyle brand through partnerships with various clothing retailers and designers. Her brand does not possess symbolic or commercial value without the association to Carrie Bradshaw, yet Parker's role as a mother is in contrast to the traits that define her iconic* Sex and the City *character. Through an analysis of cultural discourses, trends, and texts, this paper interrogates how Parker has attempted to modulate her identity as a mother in order to maintain the association to Bradshaw. Specific attention is directed towards Parker's adaptation of* I Don't Know How She Does It *by examining how the film's narrative structure reinforces the legacy of Bradshaw despite its content matter illuminating the tensions of contemporary motherhood.*

Introduction: Identifying the Dynamics of Celebrity, Motherhood, and Brand Culture

The topic of motherhood is an enduring and prominent subject in contemporary celebrity culture with tabloids documenting the pregnancies and maternal activities of actresses, musicians, socialites, and other prominent public figures. Maternity is integrated into what Sarah Banet-Weiser terms as brand culture, referring to how the relationships between products, marketers, and consumers

function as larger cultural contexts influencing identity construction within everyday life (4). Motherhood currently is considered a potentially lucrative endeavour for numerous female personalities to reinvent themselves within a highly chaotic celebrity environment. Personalities such as Jessica Alba, Nicole Richie, Gwen Stefani, Tori Spelling, and Jessica Simpson have established lifestyle brands and children's apparel collections that are legitimized by their status, expertise, and identity as mothers. Reporting on this trend of the "momtrepreneur," *The New York Times* details the logic behind the branding of celebrity motherhood, arguing, "In the last few years, salaries for movie stars have plummeted, record sales have tanked and roles in scripted dramas are going the way of the IBM computer. Yet for a growing number of underemployed actresses, singers and would-be entrepreneurs, parenthood has become a viable Plan B" (Bernstein ST1). Alba's The Honest Company, for example, manufactures and distributes biodegradable diapers and other environmentally friendly baby merchandise, and was reportedly valued at just under $1 billion in 2014 (Lowrey).

To maintain relevancy in a highly chaotic consumer environment, celebrities must now develop a brand identity. Motherhood proves advantageous for those who do not possess a fundamentally successful brand image, as such celebrities can often mold common experiences shared with all fans for their own commercial benefit. While personalities like Alba and Spelling have subsequently witnessed their celebrity persona increase following their identification and commodification as mothers, the rhetoric, narrative, and practice of motherhood poses challenges for other public figures. In the case of personalities whose celebrity coalesced prior to their role as mothers, their image can be threatened if motherhood opposes the traits that define their public and brand identity. The complications motherhood poses to celebrity identity and personal brand construction is well illustrated in the example of Sarah Jessica Parker. Following a career as a child actor with roles in film and on Broadway, Parker gained prominence for her portrayal of Carrie Bradshaw in HBO's popular comedy series *Sex and the City* (1998-2004). The lavish clothing and uninhibited lifestyle of sex columnist Bradshaw transformed Parker into a prominent fixture in the imaginary of popular culture. After the success of *Sex and the City*, Parker developed her celebrity into a fashion lifestyle brand through partnerships with clothing retailers. The strength of her brand is contingent upon the continued correlation with Bradshaw, yet her personal role as a mother, an identity portrayed by Parker in the film adaptation of *I Don't Know How She Does It* (2011), is in contrast to the traits that define Bradshaw.

Parker's brand identity demonstrates the contradictions, tensions, and ironies embedded within the relationship between identity, celebrity culture, consumption, and branding that ultimately work to construct conflicting representations

of motherhood in popular culture. *Sex and the City* introduced Bradshaw to popular culture, a character noted for her disdain towards motherhood and domesticity as demonstrated in the episodes "The Baby Shower" and "A Woman's Right to Shoes." The legacy of Bradshaw also functions as a frame of reference for critics and cultural intermediaries to review Parker's subsequent work, such as her performance in *I Don't Know How She Does It*. Although Parker's film can be classified as a "momance," a genre that fetishizes motherhood within the context of consumer capitalism, the 'symbolic baggage' Parker brings to the role of mother Kate Reddy instead overshadows the narrative of the text. This framing technique blurs Parker and the characters Bradshaw and Reddy into a single identity, while undermining the film's narrative commentary on the conditions of contemporary motherhood. The interrogation of Parker's brand identity, constructed through and situated within a variety of cultural texts and artefacts including film, fashion, television, literature, and press materials, highlights the challenges the discourse of motherhood poses to the formation of brand identity in a celebrity culture dictated by the trends of consumer capitalism.

Celebrity and the "Momance": Situating Maternity in Popular Culture

Allison Pearson's 2002 novel, *I Don't Know How She Does It*, recounts the struggles experienced by Kate Reddy, an investment fund manager, wife, and mother of two working at an established British financial institution. The novel details the impact of Reddy's demanding career, such as the tensions caused by weekly international travel upon her relationship with under-unemployed architect husband, Richard, and their children Benjamin and Emily. In addition to describing Reddy's continuous struggle to harmonize her professional and domestic responsibilities, Pearson's novel also explores the sexism, inequality, and economic anxieties experienced by women working in a high-powered office setting. *The Guardian* noted that the novel's strength is in how Pearson illuminates "the tragicomic everyday chaos of motherhood, marriage and domesticity, and the way it sits so uneasily with financial and professional success," while *The New York Times* praised the honesty Pearson incorporated into her dialogue (Knight; Masline). Both a commercial and critical success following its publication, the novel spent 23 weeks atop *The New York Times Bestseller* list, with reportedly $4 million copies sold since its initial publication (The Weinstein Company).

The release of Pearson's novel coincided with the intensification of motherhood in public discourse that helped bestow *I Don't Know How She Does It* with a particular potency in registering with readers. Sharon Hays refers to intensive mothering as an ideological practice in which mothers are expected

to devote their time, attention, and resources to their children, and those who fail to achieve this ideal are stigmatized as deviant (x). The cultural industries helped facilitate a societal obsession with celebrity and upper middle-class mothers who appear to 'impeccably' balance their personal, domestic, and professional identities. The ubiquitous phrases "having it all," and "yummy mummy" became common tropes associated with contemporary motherhood strengthened by the cultural politics of neoliberal consumer capitalism. Susan Douglas and Meredith Michaels contextualize this romanticized discourse as the "new momism," a paradoxical ideological phenomenon that celebrates the agency of women while simultaneously creating a representation of mother-hood defined by unattainable ideals. Coinciding with structural socioeconomic changes, the growth of celebrity tabloid journalism, and media representations depicting the characteristics of what constitutes a selfless "mom" versus immoral "welfare mothers," Douglas and Michaels' "new momism" symbolizes a lifestyle dependent upon surveillance and self-scrutiny (19-20). Angela McRobbie argues that the discourse of consumer capitalism has transformed motherhood into a disciplinary function of "self-perfectibility," while Elizabeth Podnieks explores how the "celebrity-industrial complex" constructs new "momist myths" reflective of contemporary maternal values (88-89). McRobbie contends that "respectable" motherhood is determined by a mother's ability to maintain her status as an acceptable consumer, otherwise colloquially referred to as a "yummy mummy." "Respectable" motherhood privileges women who postpone having children until they have acquired the disposable income required to maintain their status as proper consumers, while simultaneously discriminating against younger mothers whose inability to sustain these consumption standards is a mark of their "failed femininity" (McRobbie). Such scholarship theorizes the larger cultural discourses constructing contemporary representations of motherhood and maternal practices. It also provides a framework to critique Parker, her image, and *I Don't Know How She Does It* within the context of the social relations circulating in public discourse that ultimately influence the production, consumption, and reception of these texts in popular culture.

The adaptation of *I Don't Know How She Does It* is part of a broader trend in film negotiating the anxieties that contemporary motherhood afflicts upon privileged, upper middle-class white women. Referring to Hollywood's latest female fixation as the "momance," *The New York Times'* Alessandra Stanley argues these texts act as a cultural response to the popularity of extremely vulgar "bromance" films produced within the past decade. The topic of ma-ternity, however, is not a new cinematic narrative; films produced during the late 1970s and 1980s, such as *Kramer vs. Kramer* (1979), *Baby Boom* (1987), *Three Men and a Baby* (1987), *The Good Mother* (1988), and *Parenthood* (1989) explored the contradictions of motherhood alongside gender politics within a

changing social landscape (Raymond; Kaplan; Hauck). The films identified by Stanley as comprising the current genre of "momances"—including *Knocked Up* (2007), *Baby Mama* (2008), *The Switch* (2010), *The Back-Up Plan* (2010), *What to Expect When You're Expecting* (2012), *Friends With Kids* (2012), and *Admission* (2013)—differ from previous cinematic depictions of motherhood in that they explore rather polemic topics such as fertility, advancements in reproductive technology, surrogacy, and artificial insemination that presently ignite discussion and debate within public discourse.

A common theme prevalent in the majority of "momances" is that actresses commonly known for their celebrity tabloid presence and for playing iconic characters in their previous career endeavours are cast in the lead female role. Stanley's cultural critique of the "momance" concentrates on how comedian, producer, and writer Tina Fey integrates motherhood into her various creative works. Constituting the "headaches of privileged motherhood" as termed by Stanley, Fey addresses the anxieties of balancing her career and motherhood through the character development of protagonist Liz Lemon in the later seasons of her comedy series *30 Rock*. The themes of motherhood and guilt comprising Lemon's storyline on *30 Rock* are also present in Fey's autobiography *Bossypants*, where she writes about breastfeeding, mommy blogs, and her reservations about raising a second child. Motherhood is also a prominent subject in Fey's recent films. *Baby Mama* depicts Fey as a business executive expecting her first child through a surrogate, and addresses cultural fears pertaining to surrogacy firms and fraud. Fey again depicts a career woman in *Admission*, where she struggles to reconnect with the son she previously gave up for adoption after giving birth during college.

Although motherhood is a subject extensively addressed, questioned, and negotiated by Fey's work, and serves as the main focus of Stanley's "momance" analysis, the trend encompasses other celebrity personas. Jennifer Aniston and Jennifer Lopez portray women struggling emotionally due to complications arising from artificial insemination in *The Switch* and *The Back-Up Plan*. Prior to the release of these films, Aniston and Lopez occupied privileged positions in the iconography of popular culture. Aniston's celebrity continues to be associated with her *Friends* character Rachel, while Lopez's romantic relationships are key tabloid subjects validating her celebrity status. Motherhood is a subject consistently addressed by tabloid coverage of Aniston and Lopez. Celebrity lifestyle publications continue to monitor Aniston's figure as part of the enduring "bump watch" ("Is Jennifer Aniston Pregnant"). Motherhood is a prominent narrative framing Lopez's more recent press coverage, best illustrated by posing for exclusive photographs distributed by *People* following the birth of her twins (2008). The persistence to which motherhood has been linked with Aniston and Lopez not only creates an association between their public personas and

the material addressed by their characters in "momances," but also naturalizes their identities so that motherhood does not seem removed from their celebrity. These films reinforce the narrative that gives these celebrities cultural value, and it is no coincidence that the majority of "momances" discussed by Stanley feature actresses whose forays into motherhood—or their desire to start a family—are well-documented by the lifestyle and tabloid culture identified by Douglas and Michaels.

   The prominence of highly visible personalities in comedies on motherhood also extends to Parker's venture into the "momance" genre with *I Don't Know How She Does It*. Parker's profile exhibits similarities to Aniston, including how both actresses increased their public recognition through leading roles in highly successful television comedies while struggling to develop credible film careers following the conclusion of their sitcoms. What distinguishes Parker from Aniston is her identity as a mother, and how this aspect of Parker's personal life is negotiated into the rhetoric of her celebrity. In addition to focusing on issues that connect with contemporary arguments, values, and beliefs pertaining to motherhood and featuring lead actresses whose tabloid presence upholds their portrayal of mothers, the "momance" genre also reflects McRobbie's argument of the "yummy mummy" in popular culture. The social privilege and cultural capital of the mothers portrayed in these films strengthens the association between "respectable" motherhood and the discourse of consumerism, but while *I Don't Know How She Does It* is categorized as a "momance," the film challenges the genre due to the rhetorical prevalence of Bradshaw.

Carrie Bradshaw and the Uneasy Mantle of Motherhood

Parker's celebrity transforms her personality into a consumable product, and it is through this exchange that her identity develops the symbolic meaning that provides her brand with credibility. Scholarship by David Marshall and Graeme Turner (*Understanding Celebrity*) theorize celebrity as a discursive construct negotiating changes in cultural politics. More recent work deconstructs celebrity culture within the social context of advanced capitalism and the promotion of excess consumption as a standard in consumer society (Cashmore; Ferris and Harris). Turner's definition of celebrity, "as representation, as discourse, as an industry and as a cultural formation," provides a more inclusive framework applicable to the construction of Parker's identity and how her persona circulates in public discourse ("Approaching Celebrity Studies" 13). Parker's status was legitimized in 2004 when the Council of Fashion Designers of America presented the actress with their Fashion Icon Award in recognition of her "personal and professional commitment to fashion, and for her quintessentially New York style" ("Sarah Jessica Parker Honored"). Deconstructing

the consumer spectacle facilitated by *Sex and the City*, Pamela Church Gibson contends that "never before [has] a series and its subsequent cinematic forays become quite so fashion-linked, so brand-aware, nor created such an iconic fashion heroine of its central character, managing so completely to blur her identity with that of the actress who created her" (104). While Parker's celebrity identity strengthened in the face of immense coverage in celebrity tabloids, she also gave birth during the period of the program's production to her first child with husband Matthew Broderick. Balancing her public persona as a style icon with her maternal responsibilities, however, caused tensions to the rhetorical construction of Parker's celebrity image as an independent, single, and fashion-orientated career woman (Jermyn "Still Something"). Parker then embarked on a semi-successful film career portraying the romantic protagonist in comedy-dramas that often downplayed her new role as a mother, evident in such films as *The Family Stone* (2005), *Failure to Launch* (2006), and *Smart People* (2008). The adaptation of *I Don't Know How She Does It* would mark Parker's first cinematic portrayal of a mother, a role that required Parker to confront the rhetorical construction of her celebrity in promotional material designed to market the film.

In her prior professional endeavours, Parker exhibited an acute awareness as to how her identity as a mother is juxtaposed against the characteristics of Bradshaw. Following the arguments of Deborah Jermyn ("Still Something") that motherhood is predominantly considered unglamorous and asexual, Parker deliberately adopts a confessional rhetoric, evident by emphasizing her "ordinariness" and how fame has made Parker a more appreciative individual, in press interviews and other promotional coverage in order to maintain her status as a fashion icon (164). Helen Warner ("Fashion Celebrity") positions Parker as a cultural intermediary reinforcing class-based values of taste and aesthetics, an argument best represented in how Parker praises high fashion designers and describes the rather unrelatable experience of wearing haute couture designs (383). Jermyn notes that Parker's confessional rhetoric is shaped by a discourse of social mobility resulting from a productive work ethic, in which she openly discusses her impoverished childhood and how the birth of her son will provide balance to her life, despite the fame and expectations arising from the success of *Sex and the City* (169-171). Parker's connection to Bradshaw represents the pressures posed by the contemporary media environment, where "the complex and interlinked operations of a star's persona—including their choice of acting roles, media coverage of *both* the 'real' star and the characters they play/films they appear in—each hold the potential to collide, impact on or undo each other" (Jermyn "We Know How" 252). *I Don't Know How She Does It* poses challenges for Parker's brand since the film problematizes the contentious relationship between

symbolism, commercialism, and motherhood that is specifically negotiated by her public persona.

A central obstacle to Parker's identity as a mother resides with Bradshaw's apparent and celebrated rejection of maternal values and domestic life, traits that help support the character's depiction as the "single-girl heroine" (Nussbaum). Commemorating the tenth-anniversary of *Sex and the City*'s series finale, *Vanity Fair*'s Richard Larson published a reflection piece highlighting the comedy's iconic episodes. Larson identified "The Baby Shower" as season one's best episode, while noting that one of the strongest moments of season six occurred in the episode, "A Woman's Right to Shoes." In both episodes, Bradshaw attends a baby shower for expectant mothers who were previously socialites infamous for frequenting the Manhattan party scene. These episodes also capture Bradshaw's disdain towards motherhood, a theme significantly interwoven into the narratives. "The Baby Shower" involves Bradshaw and her friends Samantha, Charlotte, and Miranda leaving New York to attend the baby shower for a former "wild child," Laney. Following her marriage to an investment banker and moving into a traditional colonial-style home in suburban Connecticut, Laney is expecting her first child. The episode's opening scene features the four women criticizing Laney's new identity as a mother; when Samantha remarks, "I think it's sad the way she's using a child to validate her existence," Bradshaw rhetorically replies, "Why can't she just do sex and a nice cocktail like the rest of us?" Further complicating the invitation to Laney's baby shower is Bradshaw's late period, and the episode details her ambivalent attitude towards potential motherhood. The final scene of "The Baby Shower" has Bradshaw watching children at a park playground, sitting on a bench slightly removed from the activity. In a voiceover, Bradshaw wonders whether she would be able to be a "good" mother while still maintaining her *identity*—which viewers understand to mean the sexuality, vanity, and selfishness associated with her character. The episode resolves Bradshaw's internal 'dilemma' with the concluding voiceover, "On the way home, I got my period."

In the sixth season, "A Woman's Right to Shoes" highlights the discriminatory judgments mothers bestow upon single women, and the episode's plotline vindicates Bradshaw's conspicuous hobby of shoe shopping. The episode opens with numerous shots of Bradshaw purchasing different baby registry items, such as the "Burpie Blanket" and the "Little Me Activity Chair." The scene works to create an automatic association between motherhood and consumerism, and the rather outlandish names of items Bradshaw purchases underscores the conspicuous nature of such consumption. Bradshaw attends the baby shower of Kyra, and is asked to remove her $485 Manolo Blahnik stiletto pumps to prevent Kyra's children falling ill from dirt brought into the

house. Bradshaw realizes someone attending the shower has stolen her shoes. Kyra offers to repay Bradshaw but upon hearing the price will only reimburse Bradshaw for less than half of the cost, proclaiming that it is insane to spend such an amount on a pair of shoes, especially when she has other (maternal) responsibilities: "No offence Carrie, but I really don't think we should have to pay for your extravagant lifestyle … It was your choice to buy shoes that expensive." Calling this an act of "shoe shaming," Bradshaw asserts that she has a "right to shoes." After realizing she has spent "\$2300 celebrating [Kyra's] choices and she is shaming me for spending a lousy \$485 on myself," she leaves Kyra a voicemail informing her that she is marrying herself and is registered at Manolo Blahnik. Kyra purchases the shoes, and, in an act of vindication for both Bradshaw and the *Sex and the City* viewer who identifies with the protagonist's situation, the sales person asks Kyra, "And could you please watch your children, we don't want them touching the shoes." Episodes such as "The Baby Shower," and "A Woman's Right to Shoes" demonstrate the extent to which Bradshaw's character—and, consequentially, Parker—is disassociated with motherhood, a relationship that presented challenges for promoters of Parker's portrayal of maternity in film.

Parker as "Yummy Mummy": The Long Shadow of Carrie Bradshaw

I Don't Know How She Does It required the celebrity of Parker and nostalgia from the Bradshaw legacy in order to appeal to the female market sought by the production team. Rather than differentiate Bradshaw from both Parker and Reddy, promotional material only served to reinforce this connection (Jermyn "We Know How"). The best illustration of this narrative device is in Eve MacSweeney's reporting on Parker for the August 2011 edition of *Vogue* published prior to the release of the film. Followers of Parker's brand will also identify the connection between this particular *Vogue* issue, which is the magazine's annual "Age" edition, to the first *Sex and the City* (2008) film where Bradshaw is asked to participate in a fictional "Age" *Vogue* as the "Forty-year-old bride." The persona of Bradshaw is a prevalent theme addressed by the piece, and although Parker proclaims that, "Bradshaw's life is nothing—nothing—like mine," MacSweeney consistently highlights the similarities between Parker, Bradshaw, and Reddy (153). Within the introductory paragraphs of *Vogue*'s piece, MacSweeney provides an overview of the film detailing these connections for the reader:

> The script … is full of richly comic moments of the kind every working mother can identify with: Kate arriving at work to find she has pancake batter on the lapel of her suit; Kate feeling an irresistible

urge to scratch her head as she is preparing a presentation and simul-
taneously receiving a text message from school announcing that her
daughter has lice. It's as if we're seeing Carrie Bradshaw, the character
that has dominated Parker's career for the past twelve years, in a new
phase of her life. (153)

MacSweeney briefly mentions Parker's maternal identity and how she balances
her multiple public roles with her domestic life in passing towards the end of
the piece. The editorial does, however, open with MacSweeney mentioning the
nanny in charge of Parker's toddler twins and the "someone" who helps "with
the logistics of eight-year-old James Wilkie's schedule" (153).

MacSweeney's editorial for *Vogue* is accompanied by a series of photo-
graphs by Mario Testino that capture Parker in a domestic setting with a
luxurious New York City apartment serving as the location. The images also
include Parker's husband Broderick, son James, twins Tabitha and Loretta,
and friends of their children in a nursery, playroom, and family living room.
Parker's garments showcase a variety of high-end labels in which *Sex and
the City* audiences and *Vogue* readers are accustomed to seeing the actress
photographed wearing, such as a Chanel tweed suit, dresses and gowns by
Proenza Schouler and Bottega Veneta, and Bradshaw's signature Manolo
Blahnik stilettos. Warner (*Fashion on Television*) provides a semiotic reading
of Parker's *Vogue* editorial, arguing the household setting of the photographs
alongside the rather retro styling of the actress's wardrobe reference the do-
mestic television comedies of the 1950s and 1960s (115). The incorporation
of Parker's private, yet still publicized life within the *Vogue* photo editorial
represents for Warner an affirmation of "her position as [a] 'real' working
mother, but somewhat self-reflexively acknowledges the constructed nature
of the 'celebrity' 'yummy mummy'" (115). Warner's critique of the *Vogue* piece
highlights how contemporary motherhood is a discursive construction that
requires management by the cultural intermediaries who shape such repre-
sentations. Her analysis is set within the context of McRobbie's framework
of "respectable" motherhood and celebrity consumer culture, yet she does
not address the influence of Bradshaw in the editorial's construction and
meaning. The exaggerated composition of the photographs, evident through
the juxtaposition of Parker's nostalgic wardrobe in an apartment accessorized
with current technology, captures the viewer's attention due to the forced
nature of the imagery. *Vogue* readers thereby approach the images from the
imagined perspective of Bradshaw, a framing technique textually enforced
through MacSweeney's editorial.

While the character of Reddy in *I Don't Know How She Does It* exemplifies
McRobbie's classification of "respectable" motherhood—with her highly

tailored wardrobe, well-groomed appearance, and brownstone in an exclusive neighbourhood—it is not the topic of motherhood that sells the film to audiences, but rather the opportunity to extend the narrative power of Bradshaw. Bradshaw and Reddy are two distinct characters, yet the film *I Don't Know How She Does It* exhibits numerous similarities to the production techniques employed by *Sex and the City*. Pearson's novel is written in the first person, and the film depends on Reddy's voiceovers to further the plot. The casting of Parker problematizes this convention, since Parker's voiceovers create an automatic association between the film and *Sex and the City*, which was also dependent upon the protagonist's voiceovers throughout the duration of the series. *I Don't Know How She Does It* employs the "fourth wall" technique where the action freezes and both major and minor characters speak to the camera directly. Similar to the voiceovers, this technique was also incorporated into the first two seasons of *Sex and the City*. These resemblances in production help to enhance the connection between Bradshaw, Parker, and Reddy for audiences, particularly since the film was marketed to female fans of the *Sex and the City* brand by representing Parker as a "fraught working mother" (Jermyn "We Know How" 251).

Film reviews of *I Don't Know How She Does It* also highlight the parallels between Reddy and Bradshaw. *Time*'s Mary Pols, for example, identified the similarities between Bradshaw and Reddy: "Kate is Carrie Bradshaw stripped bare of her bachelors, even. She has an architect husband … who is more beta than Big … Carrie and Kate aren't all that different—they both spend a lot of time worrying, for one thing." There are also uncanny resemblances in the appearance of the two characters. Reddy's assistant Momo makes repeated remarks concerning her boss's poor grooming, pointing out Reddy's outgrown roots and unkempt hair. The disheveled appearance of Reddy is a style that is considered a trademark of Bradshaw, symbolic of Bradshaw's sexuality and carefree lifestyle. *The New York Times*' Stephen Holden further remarked upon how Bradshaw haunts the film, both physically and narratively:

> The curse of Carrie Bradshaw infects *I Don't Know How She Does It* with a severe case of what might be called post-Carrie Parkeritis. Parkeritis, if you haven't heard, is the term given to a new ailment named after Sarah Jessica Parker, in which a star finds herself condemned to eke out the last drops of freshness from the role … that made her world famous eons ago.… Bradshaw flirted her way into mass consciousness in the late '90s.… If Kate's hyperkinetic cheer and shrill self-absorption are Carrie trademarks, 13 years after *Sex and the City* first appeared on television, their appeal has all but evaporated. *I Don't Know How She Does It* seems stuck in the past. (C6)

Holden's unfavourable review highlights how the blurred identity of its lead actress in popular culture damages the film's narrative structure. His commentary more broadly speaks to how Parker's position in public discourse is threatened due to changes in cultural politics, particularly in a cluttered commercial landscape that is continuously searching for the next personality—whether fictional or genuine—to embrace. Such commentary demonstrates that critics and other cultural intermediaries did not approach the film through the character of Reddy, nor did they consider the potential for the plot to act as a social commentary on the tensions placed upon working mothers. Critics conversely viewed *I Don't Know How She Does It* through the persona of Bradshaw. Parker's role as a mother is deliberately restrained since it is not her association with motherhood that sells *I Don't Know How She Does It*. The film provides an opportunity for Parker to personify Bradshaw in order to protect her brand, a brand that is not enhanced by her maternal identity quite like other personalities occupying the celebrity landscape.

The idea of Bradshaw and Parker as an interchangeable entity, however, is a construction now fully situated into the iconography of popular culture. Cultural intermediaries reproduce this iconography and work to complicate Parker's multifaceted identity. Parker is also highly aware of how, in the context of spectacular consumer capitalism, her celebrity and monetary value as a brand identity are dependent upon the continued relevancy of Bradshaw in popular culture. Her maternal identity is not recognized by the symbolic economy with the commercial value conferred to other celebrity brands. This self-awareness and reflexivity in the maintenance of iconography, combined with the labour of other cultural intermediaries, is a process best exemplified by Parker's recent brand-building career endeavor. In June 2013 it was announced that Parker had partnered with Nordstrom, an American luxury department store chain, and George Malkemus, the Chief Executive Operator of Manolo Blahnik, to create a line of accessories. Distributed under the label SJP, Parker's collection was reported to offer shoes for approximately $300 and handbags at a cost of $700. When reporting on Parker, journalists commonly allude to Bradshaw in their work to directly communicate a frame of reference for readers. Supported by the headline, "Carrie Would Be Proud!," Britain's *Daily Mail* reported the collection to be more affordable than "Carrie's pricey footwear weaknesses" (Peppers).

Parker created an Instagram account advertising her collection to online audiences, providing a more intimate connection to consumers by featuring candid images of Parker interacting with guests at events sponsored by Nordstrom. Parker reinforced her connection to Bradshaw in images showcased by the SJP collection Instagram account, an example of what Alice Marwick refers to as the neoliberal entrepreneur constructed through self-regulation

(13). The SJP collection Instagram acts as an avenue to not only maintain Parker's visibility, but to reinforce Bradshaw as an identity, or product, "to be watched and consumed by others," through the selection of iconic *Sex and the City* imagery (Marwick 13). Recent photographs showcased shoes from the collection placed strategically on the steps of the brownstone that served as Bradshaw's beloved apartment in *Sex and the City*, a building that is now considered an iconic New York landmark. The background of the image showcases Parker stepping over a chain link barricade to place her shoes on the brownstone's steps. Another image captures the sign reading, "Do NOT go on staircase please," which was placed by the current owners to prevent constant trespassing on their property by tourists and other *Sex and the City* fans. Accompanying the photograph was the caption, "It was take your @ sjpcollection shoes to work day. #longdayforCarrie #whewwwwthosesteps #runninginheels #taxi!," with the latter hash tag referencing the common phrase Bradshaw would utter after running down her brownstone steps in a pair of stilettos (Collman). This imagery further exemplifies the dissonance entrenched within Parker's image, since, as she expressed to *Vogue*, she is "not a crazy shoe lady" who does not "think about fashion all day long" (MacSweeney 153). The visual imagery utilized to advertise the SJP collection is just one example of how Parker has chosen Bradshaw to develop and promote her brand as opposed to the actions of other celebrity mothers in popular culture.

Parker's image prevents her from successfully integrating her role as a mother into her public persona in a manner similar to other celebrities who have successfully rebranded themselves as "momtrepreneurs." Parker herself also undermines this aspect of her personal identity by consciously incorporating elements of Bradshaw into her later career endeavours. It is this self-reflexivity and recognition that her celebrity is dependent upon Bradshaw that distinguishes Parker from personalities like Alba or Fey, who have demonstrated how motherhood is compatible with their celebrity and other professional work. Parker rejects motherhood as a means to enhance her celebrity status and persona, instead relying on a narrative that celebrates the youth and freedom stereotypically associated with the single, conspicuous female consumer lifestyle. Motherhood consequentially represents Parker's 'inconvenient truth' in that maternity is irreconcilable to the discourses that compose her celebrity and success.

Conclusion: Marketing Celebrity Motherhood in Brand Culture

Bradshaw's personality and traits—particularly her love of designer shoes combined with the character's fashion choices that became tabloid fixtures resulting from the expertise of *Sex and the City*'s celebrated costume designer

Patricia Field—resonated with audiences in a decade that witnessed an intensification of consumerist values in cultural politics. Parker's endeavours with the fashion industry are a result of an identity attached to the iconography of Bradshaw in popular culture and represent her attempted transformation into a consumable brand. Parker's tabloid status as a fashion 'icon' is a complex classification ensuing from her identity as Bradshaw, a status legitimized by numerous activities involving the fashion industry after *Sex and the City* developed in cultural significance. In a celebrity climate where motherhood is appropriated as a means to increase social value, Jermyn ("Still Something") contends that Parker has efficaciously incorporated motherhood into the discursive construction of her celebrity. Parker's persona, however, signifies a site of struggle negotiating the contradictions that comprise her identities as a mother, actress, business executive, and wife, tensions which Jermyn argues also "speaks to some of the contradictions embodied in women's experience of post-feminist motherhood and culture generally" (173). Jermyn suggests that it is this precise element of Parker's celebrity that has helped expand her brand to a "remarkable new apex" (173). Despite Jermyn's detailed rhetorical analysis of how Parker accounts for her role as a mother in interviews, this aspect of her identity continues to be restrained and moderated. It is a liability to her brand as Bradshaw, which becomes an imperative image to maintain as Parker ages into her late 40s. Fronting advertising campaigns for clothing retailer The Gap, a design partnership with Halston Heritage, and clothing label and distribution deals with retailers including the now defunct Steve & Barry's and Nordstrom are just a few of the industry-related initiatives undertaken by Parker to maintain the prestige of her celebrity. These activities, however, play a critical role in reinforcing Parker's affiliation with *Sex and the City*, since Parker's brand has little legitimacy or relevancy without maintaining the connection to Bradshaw. Parker's persona as Bradshaw may help her maintain the privileged celebrity status she has grown accustomed to, but it reinforces the long withstanding beliefs that motherhood is not a viable identity for all female personalities in public discourse.

The promotional material developed to market *I Don't Know How She Does It* provides insight into how Parker has attempted in recent years to underplay her identity as a mother in order to protect her emerging celebrity lifestyle brand. Parker's celebrity continues to be associated with Bradshaw, yet the traits defining Bradshaw as the "ultimate single girl" are in contrast to the discourses of acceptable motherhood as acknowledged by the media and other social institutions (Nussbaum). The film's promotional material struggles to reconcile these dissonances between Parker's multiple roles as an actress, mother, and fashion icon, while ultimately reinforcing Parker's fundamental brand identity as Bradshaw to consumer audiences. Cultural intermediaries,

such as MacSweeney's editorial on Parker accompanying her August 2011 *Vogue* cover, strengthen the correlation between Parker's image with the self-centered and conspicuous characteristics of Bradshaw. *I Don't Know How She Does It* attempts to provide a cultural commentary concerning the social expectations and demands placed upon contemporary working mothers, particularly in a society in which maternal standards are constructed and determined by consumerist values. The narrative of the film is overshadowed by Parker's celebrity status and by the continued rhetorical longevity of Bradshaw in the imaginary of popular culture. Despite the commercial power of trends such as the "momtrepreneur" and "momances," popular representations of motherhood are continuously challenged by the intensifying relationship between motherhood and celebrity culture.

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BETTYANN MARTIN

Director of Operations Meets Gangster from the Mother-hood

Consumer Culture and the Marketing of Maternal Identities

Representations of the maternal in consumer culture reinscribe the interests of the dominant culture through a mechanism of repression and wish fulfillment, whereby maternal anxiety is assuaged with promises of empowerment and adulation. In a world with few existential bearings, in which community has been degraded through the disembedding and sequestering of personal experience, individuals acquiesce to mediated representations and consumable identities to protect against cognitive dissonance and ontological insecurity. However, mothers are particularly vulnerable to the cultural forces of mediation and commodification, given their struggle to negotiate the disjuncture between the institutional demands of motherhood and their personal knowledge of mothering. By deconstructing maternal identity as represented in the "World's Toughest Job" and "The Mother–hood" YouTube commercials, this article explores the power of consumer culture to sell images of motherhood that women can neither achieve nor abandon, because they effectively quell anxiety regarding the oppressive conditions of maternal labour, by offering utopian visions of elevated social status and collectivity. In both cases, buying into a prescribed identity bestows the benefits of membership; however, careful scrutiny reveals that cultural reproductions advance a fantasy of collectivity that is a poor substitute for individual agency. Ultimately, authenticity, as it relates to motherhood, is only possible when the personal meaning of experience is restored as the primary referent or 'expert text' in the practice of mothering.

The reification of maternal identity in mass culture has given rise to a number of consumable representations and narratives of motherhood that promote utopian fantasies of adulation and collectivity. These pre-packaged identities are attractive to women attempting to negotiate the meaning of maternity because

they neutralize social anxiety; however, through processes of mediation and manipulation these commodified images distort reality and perpetuate dreams of empowerment through idealization and consumption, such that culturally endorsed constructions of motherhood supplant personal ways of knowing and living the experience of mothering.

As Frederic Jameson argues in "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture," dominant cultural representations support particular ideologies by addressing social anxieties for the purpose of manipulation and containment, often through a calculated indulgence in fantasy. He refers to this process as a kind of "psychic compromise or horse-trading, which strategically arouses fantasy content within careful symbolic containment structures which defuse it, gratifying intolerable, unrealizable, properly imperishable desires only to the degree to which they can be laid to rest" (Jameson 141). This psychic horse-trading is evident in mass culture representations of motherhood in which normative definitions are reinforced by raising, and then, through the mechanism of wish fulfillment, quelling maternal anxiety about the social burden of motherhood. This paper will first explore the manner in which cultural mediation of experience and commodification of identity compromise the evolution of maternal self-concept; and, secondly, offer evidence of the repression-wish fulfillment mechanism identified by Jameson, whereby the 'man- made' myth of motherhood (Thrurer 341) is reinscribed in mass culture. The later will be accomplished through detailed analysis of two outwardly diverse constructs of maternal identity featured in American Greetings' "World's Toughest Job" and Fiat's "The Motherhood" advertisements. In both cases, anxiety associated with maternal oppression is expunged by offering up the notion of power through idealization and identification with a narrative of collectivity; however, by alienating mothers from the truth of their own experience, seemingly harmless reproductions of ideologically informed images of motherhood ultimately constitute a formidable obstacle to women's ability to come into consciousness of Self-as-mother or as agent in the creation of an authentic self-narrative.

Women's vulnerability to the reification and commodification of maternal identity is made possible by the absence of existential bearings in contemporary culture. In a world in which community has been degraded and atomized through disembedding and sequestering mechanisms, experience is mediated through cultural representations resulting in a phenomenon known as *reality inversion* in which "the real object and event, when encountered, seem to have less concrete existence than their media representations" (Giddens 27). For Jameson, the "free-floating absence of the referent," or the dissociation of the object world from the experience of 'reality,' is accomplished by consumer capitalism through commodity production whereby the "reproduction of copies which have no original" has replaced the value of authenticity (Jameson 135). However, the

consequences of this *simulacrum* have implications beyond the world of high art and mass culture. The commodification of experience, combined with the absence of unmediated external referents, complicates the negotiated meaning of authentic Selfhood, particularly in relation to the practice of mothering.

The project of the Self, according to cultural theorist Anthony Giddens, is a reflexive process whereby the individual negotiates a collage of culturally mediated representations in an effort to circumvent cognitive dissonance and construct a coherent self-narrative (26); however, the experience of mothering is inherently vulnerable to such dissonance as the myth of maternity, particularly its overwhelming insistence on perfection, regularly comes into conflict with the reality of life as a mother. In "The Myth of Motherhood," Shari Thurer argues that "the current ideology of mothering is not only spurious, it is oblivious of a mother's desires, limitations, and context.… This has resulted in a level of confusion and self-consciousness among mothers that their predecessors never knew" (332). Feelings of inadequacy fuel ontological insecurities, which generate anxiety and prevent authentic growth, expression, and recognition of the 'true' Self (Giddens 191). Women's alienation from this 'true' Self, in the context of motherhood, is articulated by Adrienne Rich as a function of the appropriation of maternal experience by the interests of the dominant culture, and the proliferation of particular master narratives. Rich comments,

> I realize that I was effectively alienated from my real body and my real spirit by the institution—not the fact of motherhood. The in-stitution—the foundation of human society as we know it—allowed me only certain views, certain expectations, whether embodied in the booklet in my obstetrician's waiting room, the novels I had read, my mother-in-law's approval [or] my memories of my own mother. (39)

In this way, authentic expressions of Selfhood are compromised by the cultural and discursive limits that dictate the practice of motherhood. Cultural influences shaping women's understanding of Self as mother include a combination of the forces of modernity and patriarchy - abstract systems/institutions; mediation and sequestering of experience; and consumption - all of which operate within a fundamentally oppressive ideology that alienates women from knowledge rooted in the embodied experience of mothering.

Reproductions of the dominant narrative of maternity foster inauthenticity by demanding acquiescence to culturally scripted performances of the maternal role. In truth, mothers are often forced to practice in social, political and class realities that are not of their own devising. For Sara Ruddick, "As inauthenticity is lived out in maternal practice, it gives rise to the values of obedience and 'being good;' that is, to fulfill the values of the dominant culture is taken as

an achievement" (223). In the context of powerlessness, mothers often avoid cognitive dissonance by replacing the conflicted project of Self-actualization with a single-minded adherence to the socially scripted, pre-packaged narratives of motherhood, such as those advanced by consumer culture. However, the abnegation of personal interest for the sake of cultural approval, or for the purpose of advancing a child's social appreciability, inevitably leads to repressed maternal anxiety that capitalism defuses with compensatory fantasies of power and liberation.

The idealization of maternal love is one fantasy that has been perpetuated and manipulated throughout history to reinforce patriarchal ideology and its investment in maternal perfection. The role of women's labour in reproducing and raising children is a function on which society depends (Plant 2); however, the social mandate of motherhood demands a level of self-lessness that is overwhelming, exhausting and oppressive. In *Of Woman Born*, Adrienne Rich posits motherhood as an institution that is disruptive to maternal subjectivity. She comments, "I was haunted by the stereotype of the mother whose love is 'unconditional;' and by the visual and literary images of motherhood as a single-minded identity. If I knew parts of myself existed that would never cohere to those images, weren't those parts then abnormal, monstrous?" (23). Rich's failure to imagine a coherent Self in the context of institutional motherhood reinforces the notion that inauthenticity and self-censorship are the inevitable consequences of representations that alienate authentic maternal presence. Rich acknowledges that it is only through re-animation of the Self, through agency, embodiment, and creative activity that she is able to re-constitute a sense of Being and coherent Self-narrative. She speaks of an "embattled" relation with motherhood and struggling to "give birth to—a recognizable, autonomous self, a creation in poetry and in life" (29). However, the work of reconciling consumer culture's reproductions of maternal identity with an autonomous Self-concept is a project that women often sacrifice to stave off the anxiety generated by the knowledge of oppression. For many women, acquiescence to social mandates regarding the performance of motherhood, or 'sleepwalking' as Rich describes it, quiets existential anxiety by generating an illusion of ontological security. However, by living a 'copy' of a socially constructed representation of the maternal, women are denied the agency of negotiating the meaning of their own experiences and, thereby, alienated from the unfolding of a narrative of Selfhood rooted in personal significance and embodied ways of knowing.

In the construction of a coherent and original narrative of experience, the Self is a potentially authentic referent or site of meaning-creation; however, commodified reproductions of maternal identity negate the importance of this 'primary text.' Without a solid framework of personally meaningful external referentiality, individuals are tempted to "buy in" to commodified Selves that

annihilate genuine presence. This idea relates to the conspicuous absence of the maternal subject in mass cultural representations. Thurer comments, "There is a glaring need to restore to mother her own presence, to understand that she is a person, not merely an object for her child, to recognize her subjectivity" (332). Even supposedly 'expert texts' on parenting tend to construct motherhood in accordance with an ephemeral idea of what it means to be a mother. Such texts, in the absence of the original referent (the experience of real moms), reproduce motherhood in a manner that renders the lived experience of individual subjects obsolete. Mass culture, then, as a "message mass or semiotic bombardment from which the textual referent has disappeared" (Jameson 138) has a direct relationship with representations of motherhood that deny the authentic presence and the embodied experience of mothering.

Transitional life events, such as birth, invite a renegotiation of meaning and, thereby, offer the potential to restore individual agency through an encounter with Selfhood that is both embodied and unmediated. However, these experiences are often sequestered in our society as they threaten consumer culture's best efforts to contain personal ways of knowing. Giddens argues, "Birth and death are the two main mediating transitions between inorganic and organic life whose wider existential implications are difficult to escape" (203). Likewise, Jameson suggests that it is "the haunting and unmentionable persistence of the organic … which the cellphone society … desperately recontains in hospitals and sanitizes" (Jameson 142). In other words, the power to break free of ideological restraints and consumable identities is accomplished by encounters with our own humanity: life experiences that reestablish our connection to the living world and excite existential musings, critical thought, and embodied knowledge. Such transformational experiences invite a kind of "psychic reorganization" (Giddens 13) that has the power to interrogate false consciousness and initiate a re-awakening to the possibilities of authenticity.

Having briefly examined the cultural politics informing the production and consumption of maternal identity, this paper now turns to illustrations of the mechanism whereby the dominant ideology is reinscribed in consumer culture through recourse to utopian fantasy that effectively quells women's anxiety regarding the disjunction between authentic Selfhood and the mandated performance of motherhood. For example, anxieties regarding the social value of maternal labour and the oppressiveness of the maternal condition are openly addressed in the American Greetings' YouTube commercial, "World's Toughest Job" (YouTube). Its popularity, suggested by close to twenty-two million hits, suggests the effectiveness of this idealized portrait of motherhood as a vehicle of ideological propaganda. In this commercial, a group of diverse, young executives are interviewed for a 'fake' job that has actually been posted. They are told that it is "the most important job" and that "responsi-

bilities and requirements are really quite extensive." However, they begin to rail against the terms of employment when they are told that they will not be able to sit or have a break. They are informed that they will only be permitted to have lunch "after the associate has had theirs;" and, because the associate "needs constant attention," the hours are estimated to be "135 to unlimited per week." One of the interviewees asks, "Is that even legal?" In spite of such protests, the interviewer goes further to suggest, "If you had a life, we would ask you to give that up" and insists that all tasks must be done with "a happy disposition." The executives continue to revolt against the relentless demands of this "all-encompassing" position. One respondent comments that the proposed conditions are "cruel … a sick, twisted joke," while others suggest that they are "inhumane" and "insane." The greatest resistance occurs when the interviewer comments that the position "will pay absolutely nothing." In response, one of the executives emphatically states, "No one would do that for free." Ultimately, the big reveal is that the position, "Director of Operations," is actually already filled by billions of women who 'work' as mothers everyday. In keeping with Jameson's theory regarding the need to raise anxiety for the purposes of manipulation and containment, it is interesting to note that the commercial blatantly acknowledges the oppression of women as defined by the institution of motherhood. The sheer burden of the labour, combined with the lack of remuneration becomes a source of collective gratitude, which is used to neutralize genuine maternal angst about the conditions of employment. Consequently, by itemizing the social expectations governing maternity, the commercial uses the 'fake job' ruse to reinforce a representation of the maternal that generates compensatory sympathy and appreciation, while simultaneously delineating and, thereby, perpetuating the conditions of maternal oppression.

Though the commercial pays tribute to mothers, it is in the absence of real maternal subjects that the terms of the labour contract, defining the sanctioned performance of motherhood, are negotiated and reinscribed. In this way, the commercial reinforces the separation of public and private spheres and the marginalization of maternal labour. These young executives are productive citizens of the dominant culture, living proof of the fulfillment of a mother's ultimate mandate to properly socialize her children. The commercial celebrates their indebtedness to her for reproducing the normative function of motherhood; however, by extending gratitude in their mothers' absence, the commercial reinforces the division between the corporate domain of professional employment and the maternal worksite or domestic realm. On a deeper level, by discounting the presence of 'the primary referent' (i.e., the subject of the commercial), the centrality of maternal experience and the notion of authentic Selfhood are dismissed in favour of the advertisement's recognizable portrait of ideal motherhood. In the context of the commer-

cial, the mother is central to the plot, yet she has no autonomous presence aside from her job description. In Jameson's terms, the primary referent is absent, but ultimately unnecessary. The audience readily identifies with the commodified signfication of 'mother;' and, in this way, reproducible images come to obscure the value of personal knowledge gained through the experience of mothering. The commercial's manipulation is accomplished by celebrating maternal sacrifice and, thereby, containing anxiety associated with the implications of such sacrifice; however, by consuming this idealized and culturally mediated definition of maternity, women compromise the project of Selfhood and the quest for maternal authenticity.

In mass culture, the normative definition of motherhood is reinforced through consumable identities that encourage acquiescence to a scripted performance of maternity. The mechanism, whereby representations enable both repression and wish fulfillment, hinders critical perception and the agency required to challenge the ideological presuppositions informing maternal identity formation. Thurer encourages the interrogation of the myth of motherhood, by highlighting its cultural origin: "Motherhood—the way we perform mothering—is culturally derived.… The way to mother is not writ in the stars, the primordial soup, the collective unconscious, nor in our genes" (334). Our susceptibility to cultural mythologies, Jameson argues, is rooted in the desire to identify with a coherent narrative that signifies belonging amidst a wasteland of fractured social groups, once united in relation to landscape and locale (135). Indeed, it is this fantasy of unified consciousness and collectivity that Jameson argues is regularly indulged by mass culture to contain anxiety and advance particular ideological agendas. Capitalism, therefore, satisfies existentialist angst through the illusion of collectivity implied by reproducible, consumable narratives of Selfhood. In the case of "The World's Toughest Job" commercial, the ad reproduces motherhood by re-constituting many of the traditional assumptions associated with maternity. We collectively identify with the 'job' of hardworking, selfless and unconditionally loving 'mother' as advertised, idealized, and subsequently performed by the countless mothers who strive to validate this reified and ideologically approved version of maternity. However, dutiful performances, while socially acknowledged, negate diversity of individual experience and the range of alternative narratives potentially realized through restored agency and the reinstatement of the 'primary text' (i.e., the maternal subject).

In terms of Jameson's theory of containment through fantasy, mothers are placated by the commercial's "world's toughest job" acknowledgement, and the accompanying outpouring of gratitude, such that they dare not challenge the terms of their own oppression. Mothers' hope that they might be valued for their efforts and granted status in the market economy is indulged by the flattering, though fictitious, "Director of Operations" employment title that

becomes synonymous with "mom" in the advertisement. However, Thurer argues that "the extent to which childcare is degraded as gainful employment … betrays the real value of mothers' work, despite the idealization of the stay-at-home mom" (337). The reality is that childcare workers make $35 a day or less, while many stay at home mothers receive no compensation, security, or benefits. However, mothers engage fantasies of idealized maternal value, in spite of the evidence, because they are invested in the cultural narrative that the sacrifices of motherhood garner rewards beyond monetary remuneration. Indeed, all of the interviewed executives had an appreciation for the socially constructed meaning of "motherhood." So, while the commercial reinscribes the oppressiveness of the job description, mothers are appeased by the idea that their children, in some imagined future, will share a collective respect and genuine gratitude for their performance of motherhood. In essence, mothers want to believe that they are cherished beyond their functionality; and, within the context of this advertisement, the cultural demands of maternal love, self-lessness and perfection are legitimized by the utopian fantasy that motherhood *is* recognized as prestigious employment with an appreciative audience beyond the family.

While the "World's Toughest Job" commercial reproduces and celebrates maternal labour that conforms to an idealized image of maternity, Fiat's "The Motherhood" (YouTube) commercial[1] reinscribes the ideal by marketing its ironic inversion. It sells the fantasy of maternal identity as a site of resistance, promising power through open defiance and meaningful identification with place and community; however, irony inevitably invalidates the hope of rebellion and the normative representation, actualized through consumption, becomes the default source of maternal redemption. The mother in the commercial is figured as a gangster rapper living in the "mother-hood." The idea of the "hood" is synonymous with a ghetto neighbourhood and, by default, with segregation and the material reality of oppression. The utopian function of this narrative is to advance the hope that resistance invites a collective and liberatory response to oppression; however, in the case of this advertisement, the fantasy of rebellious solidarity is raised only for the purposes of reinscribing a socially acceptable definition of maternity. Jameson writes, "the dominant white middle-class groups -- already given over to anomie and social fragmentation and atomization -- find in the ethnic and racial groups … the image of some older collective ghetto or ethnic neighborhood solidarity" (146). Here, the gangster image of the mother-hood is appropriated by marketeers for the utopian value of the perceived and idealized solidarity that can be found through class struggle and resistance; however, the speaker's obvious privilege, as evidenced by her white upper middle-class status, nullifies any legitimate claim to power through the conditions of oppression.

In the case of this advertisement, the socially prescribed maternal identity is reinforced by the commercial's presentation of its antithesis for humorous effect. The image of the mother as a gangster rapper becomes an immediate source of derision and, subsequently, any evidence of real or attempted resistance is ultimately defused by the humour implied by the suggestion that mothers are cool or transgressive. In spite of the self-deprecating humour, mothers are drawn to this narrative of maternal grace under fire, because it assuages women's fear that they are alone in their unspoken ambivalence toward the motherhood mandate.

In keeping with Jameson's theory, the anxieties generated by the conditions of motherhood are addressed for the sake of containment. In this case, containment is accomplished through the re-appropriation and rebranding of mother-hood as a site of belonging. The speaker's license plate, "Mother4Ever," addresses and subdues the fear of life-long servitude with the promise of communal identification. Jameson argues that "the family itself, seen as a figure of collectivity [is] the object of a Utopian longing" (147); and, in this advertisement, the collective of the family, as well as an implied community of similarly afflicted mothers, are employed as selling features to reinforce the socially prescribed definition of the maternal. In the ad, the mother's oppressive circumstances are neutralized by the control she exercises over her domain: "this is *my* crib and these are *my* babes." In other words, her power is established through identification with both the place and community that define the 'mother-hood.' Like the 'hoods' featured in rap culture, the mother-hood is a warzone; however, in this commercial, the mother's narrative is not a battle cry, but a mock-heroic epic of pseudo class struggle and survival. She says, "We use to talk about our lives, but now the conversation switches, we compare cesarean scars and episiotomy stitches." The terms of personal identity have shifted: relationships used to be established through connection, whereby the Self was the primary subject or 'text;' however, these war wounds, or signs of the embattled performance of motherhood, now take precedence over the broader context of women's lives.

This shift acknowledges the anxiety of middle-class women who feel betrayed by prescribed definitions of the maternal that eclipse more expansive understandings of Selfhood. As well, anxiety concerning the compromised stability of mothers' class status and personal economic security are raised when the speaker comments, "traded my sexy handbag for a snot stained sack;" and, when she laments, "my decor was smart, my taste was extra picky/Now my surfaces are cluttered, and nearly always sticky;" as well as her reference to her "designer sofa… [that now has] puke in the stitches." However, the speaker's frustration with the oppressive conditions of the mother-hood is ultimately dismissed by the humour generated by the evident contrast between her privileged position and the genuine victimization recalled by her association with rap culture and

ghetto survival. So, though the narrative outlining the deterioration of her autonomy and social security is legitimate, any claim to real sympathy is dismissed by the juxtaposition of her circumstances with the material conditions of genuine class struggle and racial oppression. The speaker's frustrated efforts to recover or reinvent her identity continue to be represented as a source of entertainment, rather than a sincere quest for Self-actualization. The speaker acknowledges that any attempt to escape the 'mother-hood' and the conditions of oppression, by recovering the dignity of her pre-maternal Self, is futile. She speaks of various diets and campaigns of exercise, but nothing has reversed the reality that her "life and body have somewhat changed." She says that she "tried to get her body back with some yogalates … zumba class … [and] these new pilates," and confides, "still got my wardrobe, but my thong now itches." In addition to these class-signifying approaches to physical recovery, her attempted Self-restoration through genuine intellectual development is also abandoned. She confesses that her book club is simply a charade to provide a socially acceptable venue to consume alcohol: "I joined a book club just so I could drink some wine."

Finally, the speaker's attempt to re-figure her oppression as a source of strength and resistance is ultimately degraded by humour, as the height of her enacted transgression is the ability to "pop a nappy on [the baby's] butt without a changing mat." In light of the speaker's failure to reinvigorate her former feminine identity or to convincingly sell her gangster image, she settles for definition through compliance with consumer culture's commodified expectations of motherhood. She brags, "My sterilizer's so dope, all my bottles be gleamin." Here the speaker compromises any claim to transgression by acquiescing, through consumption, to the reified image of the 'mother.' Given the speaker's pride in performativity, her postured resistance now rings hollow, as just one of many reproducible identities that thinly mask the desperation of genuine maternal oppression. Glimpses of this desperation are offered in the ad by the speaker's comment that she "would sell both kidneys just to get some rest," as well as her off-handed remark that she "spent three months in pyjamas, it was clearly a sign." Though she fails to name exactly the import of this sign, the reference to neglected self-care is suggestive of the possibility of postpartum depression, a frequently silenced maternal experience[2]; however, though the speaker's desperation and anxiety continually surface, their primary function is their entertainment value.

The degradation of the speaker's postured resistance is further reinforced by the misleading claim that she is "expressive," which we discover is not a reference to her capacity to give voice to oppression, but rather to her compliance with her doctor's imperative to breastfeed: "I express all the time, cause the doctor says to not breastfeed is a crime." Though breastfeeding is an embodied act,

often identified as a source of empowerment for mothers, it is interesting that it is used here to demonstrate the speaker's conformity through consumption and adherence to mandated maternal practice. Therefore, though the figure of the gangster rapper is used to sell the fantasy of authenticity through resistance, the speaker's deferral to expert texts and eventual acquiescence to the trappings of consumer culture perpetuate the institution of motherhood. Ultimately, the commercial utilizes the fantasy of strength in solidarity to quell maternal anxiety regarding the overwhelming commitment implied by motherhood. Indeed, both the fear and promise of the 'mother-hood' is its lifetime membership. The speaker's refrain reminds the audience that while motherhood might be oppressive, it offers the perk of collectivity: "It's the motherhood, it's another hood,/And once you're in the club, you're in for good." The anxiety generated by the realization of the inescapable nature of this 'club' is addressed and si-multaneously contained. The psychic "horse-trading" to which Jameson refers is accomplished, in this example, through women's sense of identification with the strength and versatility celebrated as inherent to the normative practice of mothering. In other words, mothers are placated by this representation, as it extols mothers for their composure and competence in the face of a litany of daily battles: she's a "school-run-taker, fairy-cake-baker, deal-maker, orgasm-faker, nit-raker, rattle-shaker,/Cheese-grater, night-time-waker … placater, peacemaker."

While the oppressiveness of these combined duties becomes fodder for entertainment, the acknowledgment of maternal hardship seduces mothers through the illusory comfort of recognition and collectivity. Ironically, in spite of the speaker's defiant tone, her status as 'mother' is ultimately defined by her self-proclaimed conformity to traditional, idealized images of the maternal, such as "placater [and] peacemaker." In other words, acquiescence is commod-ified through a brief and ironic claim to resistance, which is finally contained through identification with the power of peacekeeping and the fantasy of social harmony made possible through conformity and consumption. In fact, the advertisement assures the audience that the utopian vision of upward mobility and ontological security, potentially compromised by life in the mother-hood, can be reclaimed through ownership of a new, white Fiat. Indeed, Alison Clarke argues that "the process of 'becoming a mother' involves simultaneity of materiality and social conceptualization" (Clarke, 56) and that it is ultimately through consumption that women "make their babies … and themselves as mothers" (59). The promise of communal identification through material ac-quisition, then, is used to assuage legitimate maternal malcontent that has the potential to actualize into 'real' resistance and genuine calls for liberation. The automobile, in this context, becomes a sign of the speaker's complicity with the ideological function of motherhood. Her narrative of tormented maternity is

undermined by the spoils of consumer culture, which fulfill a fantasy of collective identity based not on resistance, but on shared patterns of consumption. So, rather than exposing the conditions of the marginalized war-zone that is the 'mother-hood,' toward the project of emancipating mothers from mediated realities that engender inauthenticity, the speaker mollifies maternal anxiety by representing the mother-hood as a place where harmony is ultimately enabled through normative performance, enhanced by consumption, in spite of the occasional rebellious musical interlude.

Humour, like sentiment, is disarming. In these advertisements, reified maternal identities are manipulated through recourse to an idealized image of the maternal that arouses sympathy, in the first case; and, in the later example, through an ironic treatment of maternal oppression. In both cases, the containment of legitimate maternal anxiety is accomplished through manipulation that utilizes and indulges fantasies of adoration, power and belonging to foster complicity with reified images of motherhood. However, consumable narratives of maternity are sites of pseudo-belonging that seduce mothers through the mechanism of mediation, which inverts reality and prompts identification with, and adherence to, myths of motherhood and the ideological function of 'perfect' parenting. Like all consumables, however, the myth is manufactured. Commodification denies mothers their authentic presence, rendering them copies of the fiction they have been sold. In truth, mothers are particularly vulnerable to utopian fantasies that allay anxieties regarding the conditions in which they labour, as most mothers secretly long to indulge "narrative constructions of imaginary resolutions … and illusions of social harmony" (Jameson 142). For this reason, Thurer argues that "mothers … cling to an ideal that can never be reached but somehow cannot be discarded" (340). In truth, to some extent, we want to live the lie. Mothers ascribe to the myth of maternal perfection because they want to believe in an all-consuming, self-less love beyond ideological fictions; however, fantasies of idealized maternal devotion and empowerment, such as those featured in these commercials, perpetuate women's vulnerability to cultural myths and inauthentic expressions of Selfhood.

In a world in which experience is increasingly disembedded and mediated by culture, the mother remains a symbolic site of human continuity and grounded referentiality. Given this context, it is not surprising that the personal experience of mothering has been reified and manipulated by consumer culture to support the interests of capitalism. Through the mechanisms of repression and wish fulfillment characteristic of commodified representations, 'mother' is defined as anything we are willing to buy: She is both Director of Operations and gangster from the mother-hood. She is any commodity that satisfies our collective fantasy of her perfection. By exploiting such fantasies, the market serves its ideological function and effectively alienates mothers from embodied

consciousness and restoration of Self as the 'primary text.' Authentic maternal identity will only be possible, therefore, when individual mothers share diverse stories of personal experience that liberate the narrative of motherhood from the manipulations of consumer culture. In this way, the Self is potentially restored as the original referent in the negotiated meaning of each woman's evolving concept of Self as mother. As a result, mothers might live, not in accordance with a socially defined job description, but through a reclaimed agency that centralizes personal understandings of mothering toward the composition of authentic narratives of identity.

Consumer culture has a vested interest in the commodification of maternal identity. In the absence of personal meaning as a grounded source of referentiality, women are pacified by reproducible images, consumable Selves, which offer the benefit of familiarity. However, meaningful interrogation of the myth of maternal perfection, has "the potential to free mothers from arbitrary, culturally imposed restraints … [and] the nervousness parents feels about their adequacy will dissipate when decent people are encouraged to mother in their own decent way" (Thurer 332). These words are succinctly in keeping with Carmen Shields argument that we can only make claims to authenticity when we reframe identity to accord with the meaning of experience over time through personal reflection. In this way, the individual comes to embody her own particular way of knowing and learns to embrace the concept of the Self as the primary or "expert text" (Shields 180). To defy the commodification of Being, it is to this text we must return, through the recovery of an abiding intimacy and presence in lived relationships with both the Self and others. Rich acknowledges the possibilities inherent in a return to the embodied Self as primary referent: "In order to live a fully human life … we must trust the unity and resonance of our physicality, our bond with the natural order, the corporeal ground of our intelligence" (40). In terms of the practice of mothering, no manual or cultural edict is able to impart the wisdom gained through experience. Only through the practice of mothering can women come to accommodate, within the framework of an coherent self-concept, understandings of motherhood that resonate with personal truth. Maternal theorists argue that if women can be free to practice mothering in ways that are personally meaningful, motherhood as an institution will no longer dictate the performance of the maternal role. In essence, by freeing mothers "from an uncritical dependency on an ideology of good mothering that is ephemeral, of doubtful value, unsympathetic to caretakers, arbitrary and literally man-made" (Thurer 341) women will be able to integrate discordant elements of their maternal experience toward a "tenuous equilibrium" (Kurucz, personal communication) that balances social responsibility with a more personal, experiential knowledge of maternity.

[1]It is interesting to note that the format of both advertisements is a YouTube video. Issues of class are raised, as the unspoken socioeconomic advantage suggested by the concept of the *digital divide* is that internet access is a sign of class privilege. The intended audience, therefore, is likely middle and upper-middle class mothers, enthusiastic consumers who feel the pressure to compete through consumption and have the means to "buy in" to consumable images of the maternal.

[2]For a complete etiology and comprehensive discussion of symptoms associated with postpartum depression, see Dalfen.

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JUDITH LAKÄMPER

The Pains of Sharing Pleasure

Imag(in)ing Motherhood on Pinterest

Contemporary experiences of motherhood take stage at the intersection between ideologies of intensive mothering, which demand an exclusive orientation towards the needs of the child, and new individualism, which prescribes a focus on the self, and a continuous need to re-invent self-identity physically, psychologically, and professionally. This essay argues that while Pinterest provides a forum for women to experiment with a variety of rapidly revisable self-representations, it simultaneously functions to reinforce compartmentalized idealizations of motherhood in the form of imagery from a regressive and repressive cultural archive. The ideal user is a post-feminist subject who celebrates the freedom to enjoy visual pleasure uncritically, thereby participating in the continued dissemination of unattainable ideals of motherly perfection. Thus, as a site where the conflict between different demands becomes tangible via the use of images, Pinterest offers an important window into the complexity of contemporary experiences of motherhood.

Currently the third most popular social networking site after Facebook and Twitter, Pinterest differs from the other two by its primarily pictorial content and its non-linear, mosaic structure. Initially invitation only, the image sharing website went fully public in July of 2012 and has continued to gain in popularity since: by July 2013, Pinterest had 70 million users worldwide, the vast majority being women (Smith). The website is structured like a virtual scrapbook that allows users to pin and re-pin images on different boards. Common threads or themes on these boards are fashion and style, food and diet, fitness, home décor, and crafts. The user may create his or her own themed boards, but also has access to more mixed boards, either on the home screen that shows recent pins by all the users one is following, or in a more general category that displays

a mixture of recent popular pins. Pinterest thus offers a potentially unlimited number of picture mosaics that combine images from various aspects of life.

According to a recent survey, 42 percent of mothers who use Pinterest claim that the social network has caused them anxiety (Dube). Nevertheless, many mothers continue to use the virtual pinboard to pin and re-pin visually pleasing images of foods, crafts, fashion, and bodies made fit by rigorous workout routines. In this essay, I consider a variety of popular discourses that lay claim to and structure contemporary experiences of motherhood and argue that Pinterest intensifies the complexity of these experiences, thereby causing so many maternal users anxiety. Contemporary experiences of motherhood are reflected in and shaped by ideologies of what Sharon Hays has termed "intensive mothering," which demand an exclusive orientation towards the needs of the child. At the same time, as Anthony Elliott and Charles Lemert argue, contemporary culture promotes what they call "new individualism," which prescribes a focus on the self, and a continuous need to re-invent one's self physically, psychologically, and professionally. Pinterest offers an imaginative space in which the user can seemingly fulfill both of these conflicting demands. However, a brief consideration of image theory helps problematize this assumption by highlighting the conflicts between the pleasure of posting and sharing images and the anxiety these activities and the images themselves may cause. Juxtaposing different practices of viewing (images), I demonstrate how the tension between these viewing practices creates an ambiguous experience that may include both pleasure and pain. Contextualizing this tension within contemporary discourses of post-feminism, which oversimplify the complicated relationship between the different viewing practices, I outline a reading of contemporary social networking sites that moves beyond dichotomies of good vs. bad, feminist vs. anti-feminist.

Both in content and form, Pinterest embodies a technology of Elliot and Lemert's "new individualism." In their examination of the ways in which globalization affects concepts of identity and desire, they find that, "[w]hat all of us are increasingly called upon to do, in the frame of globalizing social processes, is reshape, reconstruct, reinvent and transfigure ourselves" (*New Individualism* 3). Pinterest allows users to add and subtract images of what they desire, thematically organized into categorized boards, instantaneously—at the click of the mouse. The virtual pin board thus becomes a twenty-first century version of what Foucault, in an essay of the same name, called a "technology of the self," i.e., a practice "which permits individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their bodies, souls, thought, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (18). By way of their most common themes, Pinterest boards constitute a

representation of how one would like to appear (fashion and style boards) and what one would like to own (home décor) and accomplish (crafts, bodies), in other words, an idealized version of one's own imagined self. The possibility to rapidly alter images representing oneself and one's desires can be seen as an important technology to fulfill the imperative of Elliott and Lemert's "new individualism." Thus, the formal structure of the social network provides the basis for the public display of rapidly changing conceptions of self and functions as proof for the user's ability to reinvent herself continuously.

The constant demand for self-reinvention is particularly taxing for mothers whose identities are multiple and instantaneously irrevocably dismantled by the birth of a child. As Elliot and Lemert argue, identities are products of social relationships, negotiated in interactions with others. In fact, they claim, "fashionings of the self cannot be performed outside of relations with others.… [And if] the individual is somehow a product of his relations with others, then it stands to reason that whichever others in whatever kind of social combinations makes all the difference in the world as to whom we might be or become" (*New Individualism* 20). Entering the mother-child relationship complicates pre-existing social relationships, not simply because there is now another human being depending on one for survival (although that in and of itself introduces a fundamental change to a woman's sense of self and identity). It also alters the relationship with one's partner (if there is one), whose offspring one is now in charge of protecting, as well as the outside world in front of which one has to negotiate these different demands, and which also places certain demands on mother and child, monitoring behaviors as soon as one enters others' fields of vision. Mothering in an ideological context that presumes a baby's mother to be the "central caregiver," and which demands that "mothers … selflessly nurture their children" by "lavishing copious amounts of time, energy, and material resources on the child" provides a context in which maternal identity derives not only out of the relationship with the child, but also with an unlimited number of bystanders who—seemingly or not—hold the mother accountable to the ideological standards of intensive mothering (Hays 3, 8). The ideology of intensive mothering thus contradicts not only the demand for a focus on the self, but it also offers a very limited range of acceptable maternal behaviors, thereby obstructing the possibility for perpetual self-reinvention.

Much of the image material on Pinterest related to maternal activity and desire reinforces this limited set of ideals. Images of home décor refer to the mother's responsibility to create a comfortable home, birthday party ideas remind the mother of her duty to spend inordinate amounts of time on an event that may not even be remembered by her child, and recipes for healthy foods instate the mother as the provider of both physical and mental health.

All the while, images of fashion and worked-out bodies reinforce mother's duty to accomplish all of this while fulfilling the highest beauty standards. The categorization on boards with specific themes based on the care of oneself or one's family and children compartmentalizes virtual experience. By organizing mothers' lives into different categories, the boards offer seemingly manageable facets of ideal identities, which may produce anxiety once they are mentally and ideologically combined into a larger mosaic of perfection. While harmless on its own, the board containing images of beautified living spaces might become more daunting in combination with images of healthy foods etc., all implying the mother as responsible for achieving a state of perfection in all these different domains of her life at once.

On the surface, the social network thus appears to offer an important tool to fulfill the demands of new individualism. However, as Elliott and Lemert add, the new individualism in connection with an increased withdrawal into private worlds also has the effect of isolating the individual. This is particularly true for the users of social networks, whose engagements with others is every bit as imagined as is the virtual consumption of goods. The authors assert that, "on the level of day-to-day behavior such 'new individualisms' set the stage for a unique cultural constellation of anguish, anxiety, fear, disappointment and dread" ("Global New" 61–62). In the case of Pinterest, the content of the images not only represents unattainable ideals of consumption, but also of femininity, and more specifically, of motherhood. In 2012, the website became the subject of a brief internet debate regarding its image content and its relationship with contemporary feminisms. In a much-debated buzzfeed article called "How Pinterest is Killing Feminism," author Amy Odell discusses the content of much of the pinned material and likens it to the imagery disseminated by twentieth century American women's magazine culture. According to Odell, "Pinterest's user-generated content … feels like a reminder that women still seek out the retrograde, materialistic content that women's magazines have been hawking for decades." For Odell, the image content represents images of femininity from the past that somehow make a re-appearance in this specific social network.

Taking a closer look, Odell finds that it is precisely the structure of the network and its emphasis on images that enables such a recurrence of traditional concepts of femininity. Although knowledge of the misogynistic content of gender stereotypes has become commonplace, Pinterest exemplifies that a cognitive rejection of gender stereotypes can easily be undermined by impulsive positive responses to the same stereotypes. Odell writes, "even with the rising popularity of feminist content online, adult women are still conditioned to think about diet and exercise and looking beautiful, so it makes sense that they'd pin these things, impulsively or not" (Odell). In other words, when using

networks such as Pinterest, the trained consumer, embodied by the clicking hand that likes and re-pins, might act faster than cognitive feminist arguments can prevent her from taking such action. In this manner, culturally repressive content continues to be perpetuated and disseminated, with women being the primary consumers and (re)producers of the generated content.

Odell's post was met with fierce resistance. The main point of contention is the fact that with Pinterest, as with all other social networks, the users are generating their own content. In her response titled, "If You Believe Pinterest Is Killing Feminism, Then You Must Also Believe That Women Are Killing Feminism," social media commentator and blogger Terri Ciccone takes issue with what she considers this main oversight in Odell's argument: the fact that the women themselves select and distribute the content, as though that in and of itself made anti-feminist content impossible.[1] "Isn't Pinterest all user-generated content?" Ciccone asks. "If women are selecting and supporting the content that gets pinned and re-pinned, and if you subscribe to Odell's argument, then Pinterest isn't killing feminism — women are" (Ciccone). For Ciccone, this is inconceivable. Instead, she argues,

> I believe that women are … attracted to Pinterest not because they want to find the perfect fireplace tchotchkes, but because they enjoy the design innovation, and interacting with the platform is simply attractive and fun. In a day in which some of us (ahem!) are inundated with spreadsheets, memos and meetings, at the end of the day it feels good to have some visual stimulation and engage with big, bright photos. It's important to remember that if we don't like something we see on Pinterest, we should remember that it was put there by a fellow user. It isn't bombarding us like a billboard or an ad in the subway; women are curating their own experience on the site. They're not victims; they're actors. And that's a positive thing.

By asserting that using Pinterest is "simply attractive and fun," Ciccone attempts to construct the act of sharing images as innocent and harmless. Her readers are invited to view the posting of beautiful images as a reward for hard-working women, something to enjoy and a way to relax from the stressful workday. What is more, according to Ciccone, because women are actively involved in posting and reposting images of content they like, they are actively involved in creating the network, and choosing what they wish to see there.

The debate between Ciccone and Odell is reminiscent of and can be contextualized within the rhetorical framework of post-feminism. According to Angela McRobbie, discourses embedding this rhetoric rely heavily on "tropes of freedom and choice," by which "feminism is … made to seem redundant"

(11). As McRobbie describes, this rhetoric is particularly prominent in popular culture, as evidenced by Ciccone's blog post circulated via social networks and other new media apparatuses. Ciccone's arguments build on an underlying assumption that is pivotal to McRobbie's description of post-feminist discourses, namely the idea that feminism's goals of women's freedom and equality have been achieved, and that to further insist on pointing out misogynist tendencies in media culture is anachronistic pedantry. Instead, the newly liberated female subject is expected to "withhold critique," and her freedom is thus predicated on her willingness to accept the post-feminist paradigm. This new ideal subject thus displays "an uncritical relation to dominant commercially produced sexual representations which actively invoke hostility to assumed feminist positions from the past, in order to endorse a new regime of sexual meanings based on female consent, equality, participation and pleasure" (18). By emphasizing that women turn to Pinterest merely for the pleasure of experiencing the "big, bright photos," the "design innovation" in this "platform [which] is simply attractive and fun," Ciccone depicts the average female Pinterest user as a post-feminist consumerist subject who merely follows her desire for fun, beauty, and pleasure.

In addition, Ciccone underestimates how antifeminist ideologies are disseminated. Her claim that Pinterest is not like a "billboard or an ad on the subway," but instead that "women are curating their own experience" displays a naïve and limited understanding of ideological pathways. In his seminal essay, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," Louis Althusser emphasizes that ideology depends on the characteristics of the channels through which it is disseminated. According to Althusser, "an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices. This existence is material" (112). The common practices structuring the use of Pinterest thus determine both form and content of the disseminated ideology. The fact that 80 percent of image content is re-pinned somewhat qualifies Ciccone's claim that "women are curating their own experience" (Moore). Pinterest is rarely about introducing new content and rather about liking or re-pinning something someone else already shared. The innovative feminist potential of the website identified by Ciccone is thus undermined by the actual practices that structure the Pinterest experience. The images that are disseminated mostly come from a cultural archive most users are already familiar with. In her sociolinguistic analysis of the network, Katherine Gantz finds the rhetorical structure of the website to be in support of positivity and affirmation, discouraging and sanctioning articulations of dissent or critical commentary. Gantz writes, "[i]n this way, the site often functions as a repressive mechanism, recycling hegemonic notions of feminine politeness and capitalist-constructed heteronormativity that prevent women from articulating individual or critical thought" (28). While one might argue,

as one user does, that this also leads "feminist content on Pinterest to be more respected than on other social networking sites" (Hodge), this participation practice nonetheless presupposes an uncritical, polite user. The ideal Pinterest user is a post-feminist female subject.

Ciccone's argument fundamentally hinges on the underlying assumption that Pinterest users engage only superficially with their images. She argues that the pleasures are primarily "visual," neglecting to consider the cultural semiotics associated with each image. In order to explore the tension between aesthetic pleasure and critical engagement, I turn to German phenomenologist and image theorist Lambert Wiesing, who distinguishes between seeing images and reading them: whereas in the first case, the viewer's engagement with the images is primarily motivated by the aesthetic pleasure they provoke, the second approach focuses on what the image re-presents, i.e. what it refers to in the "real world." In his book *Artificial Presence: Philosophical Studies in Image Theory*, Wiesing examines the way in which images make things visible, and most importantly, he argues, "the image opens up a view on reality liberated from the constraints of physics" (17). For instance, what is depicted does not age, even though the image carrier might. To this, I might add, an image also shows something that does not have a history. An image of a beautiful birthday cake thus displays no evidence of the investment of time, money, and energy that went into creating it. We might admire the cake's shapes and colors, but the image does not give away its history. Similarly, if images of well-trained bodies display the sweat that lead to them, they do so to aestheticize the body rather than to trace time. Images of well-designed nurseries show no signs of the life that is supposed to take stage in them. The cake, the body, the nursery—they simply *are*.

Departing from this conceptualization of the image as "pure visibility," Wiesing distinguishes between a semiotic approach to images, which insists on reading images like signs, i.e. with regards to what they re-present, and one based on perception, which is interested in what the image presents, i.e. makes present or visible. Wiesing shows that in a perception-based approach, one has to distinguish between "image carrier," that is the material on which the image appears—here the computer screen, the phone, or the tablet,—the "image subject" which is the real object to which an image can refer, and the "image object," i.e. the depiction that visibly appears in the image. What is important is the clarification that "the image object is not a real object;" instead it is what Wiesing calls a visibility construct. Wiesing claims that "pure visibility is a description of the particular kind of being-an-object … that distinguishes the image object: it is necessarily an object that is exclusively visible" (19, 20). It is this approach to images that illustrates the point taken by Terri Ciccone in the above-cited debate regarding Pinterest and feminism: one might very

well be aware of cultural constructions of femininity and yet enjoy the visual stimulation provided by the Pinterest imagery, if one regards the images as presenting rather than representing something.

The post-feminist's approach to re-pinning retrograde content on Pinterest is thus to emphasize the image's surface over its depth. By this account, it is therefore the image surface—what it presents—which triggers a user to like or re-pin the image. When posting the image of a nursery, for instance, the user might appreciate the way the light falls into the room through the window, or the color composition, or the arrangement of geometric shapes. The initial moment of responding to the image surface, and of liking or re-pinning the image, in this approach looks at the image itself as the object, rather than viewing the nursery as a space that exists somewhere else in "real" time and space. What is more, post-feminist arguments like Ciccone's emphasize that women are perfectly capable of delighting in the presence of the image while being aware of its antifeminist content. In fact, their ability to laugh off the layer of representation and focus merely on the aesthetic pleasure provided by the image surface exemplifies another aspect of the ideal postfeminist subject, what cultural critic Ariel Levy has termed the "female chauvinist pig." Like Raunch culture, which Levy explores in her book *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture*, Pinterest contains much material that has "traditionally … offended women, so producing or participating in it is a way both to flaunt your coolness and to mark yourself as a different, tougher, looser, funnier—a new sort of loophole woman" (96). This new woman—the post-feminist subject—can participate in the dissemination of visual ideals of motherhood because she is aware of its implications and thus assumed to be immune to them.

This way of seeing images in terms of what they present is categorically different from the semiotic approach, which views images as signs, and thus "reads" them. Looking at the image as a sign allows the viewer "to refer to a concrete object in the physical world" (Wiesing 18). The image of the nursery suddenly refers to something else: a real room somewhere, in which a baby will one day sleep, a room which was designed and thought out by someone who had to consume goods, that is to spend money to purchase the items within it, and energy to arrange them as they are in the image. It represents a peaceful space, implying the mother's role in creating this kind of environment. Reading the image as a sign fills the nursery with a past and a future. That there is often a large gap between the ideal presented in an image and its attainability is addressed in the frequent "How-to" manuals shared on the website. These manuals explicitly acknowledge the history of specific image content and emphasize an interest in what is represented over what is presented, i.e., the depth of the image over its surface. A large subgroup of these are the so-called

"upcycles": users take old or discarded items, give them a makeover by cleaning and painting them, removing or adding certain elements, and thus turn it into something new, quite often a new toy for their children. Thus, these manuals allow women to demonstrate their capabilities for reinvention, while at the same time instilling the crafty arts as a central ideal of contemporary motherhood. In these cases, images are taken seriously as signs, as possessing a history and as referring to something that is present in everyday life. However, Wiesing warns us, an image does not have to be a sign: "An object indeed becomes a sign only when it is assigned a content, a sense, or a meaning" (18). Wiesing holds that there is a difference between looking at an image out of curiosity about what the image object looks like, and turning it into a sign by assigning meaning to it. Thus, Wiesing might support Ciccone's claim that Pinterest users might very well look to the images merely for the pleasure they derive from the image surface.

However, as the 42 percent of anxiety-ridden maternal Pinterest users attest to, matters are much more complicated. While the two approaches to image perception might be categorically different in nature, they do not necessarily have to occur separately, and it is precisely their concomitance that makes the Pinterest experience so fraught, especially for mothers. Pinterest users experience a double conflict: first, the visual surface of the social network suggests a detachment from what the images represent that, in the face of the omnipresence of ideologies of intensive mothering, is difficult to uphold; and second, the Pinterest interface promises the opportunity for the continuous and rapid reinvention of selves as demanded by the culture of new individualism, while the actual image content on the network, reflecting the restricted content of mothering ideology, in fact provides a very limited range of images in support of a reinvention of self. Pinterest users thus might find themselves in what Lauren Berlant has called a "relation of cruel optimism." Berlant defines such a relation as one which "exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing. It might involve food, or a kind of love; it might be a fantasy of the good life, or a political project. It might rest on something simpler, too, like a new habit that promises to induce in you an improved way of being" (1). According to Ciccone, Pinterest offers an experience of purely visual pleasure, one where women, after a hard day of work, can come home and relax by virtually consuming a variety of harmless images. However, as Berlant emphasizes, investments in certain objects or ideas and what they promise become cruel "when the object that draws your attachment actively impedes the aim that brought you to it initially" (1). While many women might approach Pinterest from a post-feminist standpoint, with an interest in innocent pleasure, a substantial number of users, mothers in particular, find their own ability to use the website as a tool for relaxation impeded by

the images of perfection that refuse simply to present, but instead represent the cultural demands perpetuated by the contemporary ideology of intensive mothering. At times, this conflict between the idealized image object and its attainability is addressed and reflected upon by Pinterest users. For instance, Jenna Anderson, photographer and blogger at the Pinterest spoof page Pinterest Fail, calls the network, "largely a site of unrealized dreams" (qtd. in Dube). The images of toppled cakes, messy manicures, and misshaped crafts function as a significant counterhegemonic effort to ridicule the idealistic versions of motherhood disseminated in the social network. Nonetheless, the cognitive awareness of the unattainability of idealized visual versions of motherhood fails to eliminate the anxiety experienced by so many maternal users. Ultimately, while the rhetoric of choice and empowerment that dominates so many contemporary debates, including those about the state of feminism, might make sense if one assumed a viewing practice that is exclusively focused on seeing image objects, it is difficult to envision such a pure viewing practice in the context of contemporary images of motherhood which simply cannot be separated from the omnipresence of discourses of intensive mothering. In fact, one might argue, this rhetoric of choice and empowerment can be detrimental to the experiences of contemporary women as they become unwittingly involved in the dissemination of particular images, all under the guise of a so-called freedom of choice.

Therefore, the question of whether Pinterest users engage in feminist or anti-feminist behavior oversimplifies the complexity involved in contemporary negotiations of identity. As a number of different discourses place a variety of conflicting demands on contemporary mothers, a monolithic understanding of feminism obstructs any nuanced consideration of the variety of feelings and desires that accompany mothers' behaviors and processes of decision-making. Considering both the pleasure experienced in light of the aesthetic surface and the painful anxiety provoked by the image's content—as well as the possibility of the images' allegedly retrograde content causing pleasure—allows us to move past simple dichotomies that evaluate popular culture artifacts based simply on whether their content is feminist or anti-feminist. It is unhelpful to patronize those mothers who experience a sense of agency when using Pinterest by declaring them marionettes in the patriarchal system, but it is nonetheless important to shed critical light on what the cultural archive present in Pinterest imagery may imply once one considers them as representations rather than mere presence.

[1]Ciccone's post appeared in the context of the website The Jane Dough, which has been taken down since I first began drafting this paper. Nonetheless, her

position is worth engaging with since it is representative of the larger discourse of post-feminism.

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From Mothering Without a Net to Mothering on the Net

The Impact of an Online Social Networking Site on Experiences of Postpartum Depression

This research speaks to the desire expressed by women, health care professionals, and researchers alike, for an alternative, non-pharmacological or therapy-related intervention for postpartum depression (PPD). Interviews with twenty-two mothers and members of Momstown.ca—a social networking site focused on connecting mothers online and face-to-face—demonstrated new mothers are increasingly isolated and without community. However, mothers reported becoming members of Momstown allowed them to build a social network providing them company, camaraderie, and community, resulting in improved mental health. We conclude services like Momstown could be viable, alternative interventions for women with PPD, enabling mothers to survive and thrive postpartum.

The culture of motherhood is rapidly changing (Warner). Today's mothers are likely to transition into motherhood more socially isolated than in previous generations (Nelson). Women's increased participation in the paid workforce (Gaudet, Cooke, and Jacob), geographical distance between family members (Posmontier and Horowitz), and increased rates of single parenthood (Gallagher, Hobfall, Ritter, and Lavin) have resulted in many women mothering without a safety net and consequently at risk for developing postpartum depression (PPD). Within this cultural shift, Abrams, Dornig, and Curran argue that, "more exploratory research needs to be conducted to develop testable interventions for PPD that capitalize on mothers' natural help-seeking strategies and self-care inclinations" (548).

This paper responds to the call for exploratory research on PPD through a research project with Momstown.ca (MT)—a Canadian social networking site that connects mothers both online and face-to-face. We will discuss the impact

of MT on experiences of postpartum depression and postpartum depression symptoms, arguing that, through the provision of company, camaraderie, and community, MT improved maternal mental health for women who describe motherhood as overwhelming and isolating. Our research demonstrates that women are moving from mothering without a safety net, to mothering on the Net. The findings demonstrate that women's use of MT is an act of self-care, one that decreased their symptoms of PPD and increased their self-reported levels of mental health. We begin with an exploration of existing literature on postpartum depression before turning to the data gathering decisions and findings of the study.

Background

Postpartum Depression

Postpartum depression occurs widely across a variety of diverse cultures and social identities (Posmontier and Horowitz) and is the most frequent form of maternal morbidity following delivery (Dennis "Peer Support"). Postpartum mood disorders range from the "normal" adjustment period known as "the baby blues"—characterized by mood swings, tearfulness, irritability, and anxiety, which usually dissipate within two weeks postpartum—to the more severe and less frequently occurring postpartum psychosis—characterized by symptoms of delusions, paranoia, and hallucinations (Abrams and Curran "Middle-Class"). If feelings of depression and anxiety persist past the baby blues and are combined with symptoms such as helplessness, hopelessness, or concerns about hurting oneself or the baby, the disorder is termed postpartum depression (PPD) (Kennedy, Beck, and Driscoll).

PPD has been documented in approximately 13 percent of women postpartum, but it must be noted that the illness is under-reported (Ugarriza, Brown, and Chang-Martinez) and rates are much higher for populations that are already structurally vulnerable—for instance, women of colour, women with pre-existing mental health issues, single mothers, immigrant women, rural women and so forth (Abrams and Curran "Maternal Identity"). The cause of PPD is unknown, or at the very least, multi-faceted. Hormonal changes as a result of childbirth are the most commonly cited possible cause of PPD, but most research demonstrates that biological explanations alone cannot explain the illness (Knudson-Martin and Silverstein). Psychosocial and cultural factors have been explored (Beck) and the conclusion is that PPD is an umbrella term for a wide variety of postpartum mental health concerns that are likely multi-factorial in etiology (Dennis "Preventing Postpartum Depression"). However, we do know that PPD is a major maternal and public health issue (Wisner, Logsdon, and Shanahan) with significant consequences

for mother, child, and family (Field; Dennis "Peer Support").

Prevention and Treatment

Preventing PPD has been complicated due to inconsistent screening techniques, insufficient knowledge about PPD among both the general population and the medical community, and a lack of responsiveness by health professionals (Abrams and Curran "Middle-Class"). These barriers to prevention are compounded by the fact that women tend not come forward with possible symptoms of postpartum depression. Research has demonstrated that while PPD affects a significant number of mothers each year, approximately half of these cases go unreported and undetected (McGarry, Kim, Sheng, Egger, and Baksh). Mothers often recognize they have symptoms of PPD but tend not to report their symptoms for multiple reasons including fear of social stigma related to mental illness (Abrams and Curran "Maternal Identity"), intervention by Child Protective Services (Chew-Graham, Sharp, Chamberlain, Folkes, and Turner), and shame (Sword, Busser, Ganann, McMillan, Swinton). Women who do seek help for PPD have reported negative experiences with health care professionals who reject, minimize, or ignore their symptoms or offer impractical, unhelpful advice (Abrams and Curran "Maternal Identity"). Chew-Graham et al. found that physicians and health care professionals also describe the current system as hindering women's ability to come forward with PPD symptoms.

Those mothers who do report symptoms are typically offered two main forms of treatment: counseling (Bledsoe and Grote) and/or pharmaceuticals (Wisner et al.). However, research has demonstrated that many women are dissatisfied with counselling (Abrams Dornig, and Curran) and report a strong desire to treat their illness using non-pharmacological methods (Dennis and Chung-Lee; Goodman). Research suggests that facilitating social support is a particularly viable strategy for both preventing and treating postpartum depression (Ugarriza et al.). Indeed, Dennis ("Peer Support") found that peer support creates a protective effect on women. Yet new mothers in Canada are discharged from hospitals too early into support systems that are too small (Zelkowitz), often separated geographically from family and left to adjust to the life-changing arrival of a new baby on their own (Nelson). Health care providers understand social support to be a major factor in the prevention and treatment of PPD, but they do not know how to facilitate that support for the women in their care (Leahy-Warren et al.; Sword et al.).

Taken together, this literature demonstrates there is a need, expressed by women, health care professionals, and researchers, for postpartum strategies that offer an alternative to pharmacological and therapy related treatments while fostering social support. Our study of Momstown.ca suggests that

online social networking creates one such alternative intervention.

The Purpose of the Study

The initial objective of this project was to investigate the roles of online social networking in the development of social capital for mothers. In doing so, we explored experiences of social isolation among mothers who were members of MT, a social networking community aimed at connecting mothers online and face-to-face. We did not set out to study postpartum depression. In fact, our interview guide contained only one question that spoke specifically to women's mood postpartum. We asked, "Have you had low moments as a mother? If so, has MT done anything to make those moments more bearable?" Despite the lack of attention directly paid to PPD in our interview guide, just over thirteen percent of the women interviewed disclosed formal diagnoses of PPD, while many others discussed self-diagnosis and negative emotions that persisted throughout their early experiences of motherhood. Thus, while we did not intend to study the impact of MT on women's experiences with PPD, this unintentional finding is a major contribution of our project.

Methods

MT is an online social networking site created in 2007 by three Southern Ontarian mothers for "for moms who believe in community." The site aims to facilitate connections between mothers in the same geographical location. For a membership fee of $45 per year, mothers and their families access an online calendar that schedules roughly 20 events each month in the local community. Their 24-hour message board ("perfect for those sleepless nights") allows women to meet online, connect, chat, ask advice, and if necessary, vent. In exchange, the site includes ads targeted towards moms, mom-related product reviews, sponsored "e-blast" email messages and blogs. Though the connection is formed in cyberspace, the goal of MT is to connect mothers face-to-face so that they can "get off the computer and out of the house."

Recruitment and Data Collection

Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants based on "their relevance to the research question, analytical framework, and explanation or account being developed in the research" (Schwandt 232). Recruitment techniques included an email advertisement mailed to each member of one Southern Ontarian MT franchise through an "e-blast", an invitational "post" on the MT message board, and a brief talk given at an organized MT event. We also used snowball sampling to recruit participants (Patton); at the end of each interview, participants were asked to suggest another member of MT

who might be willing to participate in this study. Through these methods we recruited twenty-two members of MT.

We conducted "active interviews" (Dupuis) lasting approximately one hour. These interviews took place wherever the participant felt was most comfortable and convenient, which in all cases resulted in the interviews taking place in the participant's home. Participants were offered reimbursement for childcare costs accrued as a result of the interview, though no participants took us up on this offer. Children were at home during every interview conducted; often this meant participants were tending to children while being interviewed, but just as often children were napping, playing quietly, or being watched elsewhere in the home by a spouse or childcare provider. All interviews were digitally recorded and professionally transcribed with each participant assigned a pseudonym. The quality of data was monitored through periodic checking of interview files with the accompanying transcriptions.

Data Analysis

To analyse the data, we used the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss) in which open coding within and axial coding within and between interviews resulted in identification of recurrent conceptual themes. Each interview transcript was first analyzed using open categories to develop initial descriptive categories (e.g. "someone who understands" and "friendship"). Focused or selective coding was then used to compare categories both within and between interviews, and to look for emerging conceptual themes, (e.g. "Camaraderie"). Subsequently, patterns of relationships among themes were also examined (such as the relationship between "Camaraderie" and "Community"). These patterns of relationships were developed into the major themes for this article (for instance "You are not alone"). Consistent with this method, the data analyses and coding processes proceeded simultaneously with the data collection process. In this sense, the process was iterative so that emergent ideas from the analysis of the early interviews were used to provide direction for later interviews so that interesting ideas were followed up on (Rubin and Rubin). Although individual transcripts were analyzed through the development of themes, the group of transcripts were also analyzed as a whole to compare and contrast developing patterns of relationships among the participants' comments and experiences. Thus, the themes were inclusive of data across the interviews.

Profile of the Participants

Twenty-two women participated in the study. Of those twenty-two women, three reported formal diagnoses of postpartum depression (PPD-FD), two reported self-diagnoses of postpartum depression (PPD-SD), and eleven women reported experiences we described as postpartum depression symptoms (PPD-

SYM). These eleven women did not describe their experiences specifically as PPD; however, their descriptions of their postpartum experience included a significant number of PPD symptoms such as anxiety, shame, grief, numbness, lack of attachment to their child, inability to cope, and sadness that lasted more than two weeks postpartum (Beck). It should be noted that twenty-one women interviewed for this study described the transition to motherhood as isolating and overwhelming. However, these women were not defined as symptomatic of PPD unless those feelings were in combination with several other reported symptoms, persisted past the "baby blues", and were described as significantly impacting upon their experience of motherhood. Thus, sixteen interviews were analyzed as data for this paper. The participants ranged in age from twenty-six to forty years old. All but one of the participants were married, one was separated. None of the participants self-identified as either gay or lesbian. Five of the women were on parental leaves, while five worked full time, another five worked part time, and one was a stay-at-home mother. All participants had between one and three children with ages ranging from seven months to six years. The majority of respondents identified as White Canadians; however, two participants were immigrants to Canada, two identified as Hispanic, and one as Southeast Asian. All participants had at least some college education, with the majority holding university degrees and one holding a Master's degree. The household incomes of participants ranged from $20,000 to over $100 000 a year.

Findings

Data analysis of the interviews with MT members revealed three main themes (each with accompanying subthemes) that described the participants' struggles as new mothers, their experiences with MT, and the ways those experiences with MT addressed their struggles with motherhood: (1) "I'm so alone" (isolation), (2) "You're not alone" (company, camaraderie, community) and (3) "We're gonna get through this" (improved mental health).

"I'm So Alone"

Isolation. All participants interviewed described new motherhood as "isolating", a struggle in which they felt overwhelmed and alone without a strong community. Andrea (PPD-SYM) remarked, "Everyone warns … being a mother is challenging and it can be isolating, but you can know and be told these things but until you're actually going through them you don't understand how bad it can get, how isolated you can be, how overwhelmed." Participants suggested their isolation was exacerbated by factors such as the cold Canadian winters, moving to a new location, living geographically distant from family, leaving

the paid work force, and having little social support. As Margaret (PPD-FD) described: "I quit my job, moved here, desperately lonely, desperately lonely … so stuck … you're standing around going oh my god there's nobody here, no one, there's no peer support, and it's just hard." Participants described a lack of connection with community, including communities of other mothers, as a contributing factor to the isolation they felt as new parents. Maureen (PPD-SYM) reported a loss of community upon becoming a mother: "It's just so isolating in that sense that you lost all of your community." And Helene (PPD-SYM) argued: "We were never meant to be in a room alone with a child as an adult. We're not meant to be that way. You have these … communities that should be together. And you weren't meant to be a mom alone with a child or two children. No wonder people go crazy." Without a support system to help ease the transition that comes with the arrival of a new baby, and without a strong community of friends and family to help guard against isolation, these women were facing new motherhood alone. Being left alone with a new baby and at times older children as well was reported to be at the very least a contributing factor to the exacerbation of pre-existing postpartum depression symptoms. At the most, women in this study reported that this isolation and lack of community left them directly susceptible to PPD.

"You're Not Alone"

The women in this study described motherhood as lonely and isolating; however, these women repeatedly reported that becoming a member of MT made them feel they were not alone after all. MT allowed these women the opportunity to make connections with other mothers, providing them with company, camaraderie, and community, all vital connections they were previously mothering without.

Company. The mothers interviewed for this study credited MT with supplying company. Participants described the mere presence of adult company outside the home as vital for alleviating isolation and providing peer support. Anna (PPD-SD) maintains: "I think the psychological benefits are just getting up in the morning and knowing that you have somewhere to go and you have people to get together with and, and that's a huge psychological benefit." Kristen (PPD-FD) suggested her PPD would have been greatly improved had she engaged in the company of other mothers earlier: "I had postpartum depression after I had Abby, so I was just like, no, I need to keep to myself. I don't need to meet anybody right now… and I really wish I had just overstepped myself and joined MT when I had postpartum depression because I think I would have been able to deal with things a lot better and differently." Many mothers stressed the importance of being able to access the company of other women both online and face-to-face, for, as Meredith (PPD-SYM) explains: "Sometimes you can't

leave your house, sometimes we can, and it's nice because it had both sides, it has in-person activities and then also has online for when you are stuck at home and can't leave, 'cause there's a snowstorm or the child's sick." Mothers reported requiring these connections with other mothers for the simple yet significant reason that they needed to get out of the house and be in the company of other adults, which alleviated feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Camaraderie. However, participants expressed that it is not simply the company of any other adult that they desire; MT enabled them to meet "comrades". This sense of camaraderie facilitated by MT was significant in terms of connecting women to *peers* who were *non-judgemental*. As Morgan (PPD-SD) explained: "I want to hear somebody that's gone through it, I want somebody to be here with me that's gone through it and can tell me this is fine. And that's hard to find when you're in the middle of it. And I go on the message boards and I get a fast reply … and then that makes me feel like, well, okay, I'm not alone." Women with diagnoses of PPD found the sense of camaraderie and community of mothers they gained through MT was therapeutic, whether their peers had PPD or not. Jo (PPD-FD) describes: "I needed other people in my circumstance. Not necessarily with postpartum but other new moms. Just the social and emotional aspect of getting out of your house and talking to someone else and interacting and knowing that someone else knows what you're going through, they understand and you know it just, it's reassuring knowing that you're not the only one going through this. So, sanity. I get sanity out of it." Participants also maintained that MT members are uniquely *non-judgmental*, which strengthens that sense of camaraderie. Andrea (PPD-SYM) recalled: "Everyone's so supportive there. Like, I never breastfed and sometimes you tell some people that and you're in big trouble. And I've met other moms there that are like, "oh I wish I didn't breastfeed," you know what I mean, instead of a typical, "you didn't???" Women reported a strong sense of camaraderie from their membership in MT due to their perception that other members were truly peers—and also due to the uniquely non-judgmental environment—a sharp contrast to many of their experiences with overcritical fellow mothers.

Community. Having reported a lack of community before joining MT, many women emphasized the importance of gaining membership to an entire network of other mothers. Many mothers described their neighbourhoods as unfriendly, suggesting that these changing neighbourhoods are the result of a more transient culture, and that MT helps build community in the wake of those changes. Meredith (PPD-SYM) explained: "Instead of being with family or the community that I grew up with, it's with this new group of moms … I'm a part of that community…. The way that our society's changing so much, you don't even know your neighbours nowadays. . . you wouldn't go to your neighbours and ask for a cup of sugar now. But I could totally call up one of my moms

and they'd drive over with a cup of sugar for me." This sense of community was often referred to as a major factor in sustaining women's mental health. As Lucy (PPD-SYM) suggested: "The meeting people, the community, it's really what it fills I think. Because if I had to deal with that *(referring to kids in background)* all day long by myself I might go crazy … I think that helps that you're miserable together." Though the ability to create friendships online was appreciated by many women, participants also stressed the importance of meeting face-to-face for building community. Lucy (PPD-SYM) maintained: "I had joined other forums in the past but it's not the same. You can sit in front of a computer all day long, but you don't feel like you really know these people a lot of the times, you know? So when you're getting out meeting them face-to-face you feel like you're forming actual friendships as opposed say just to you know talking at somebody online." In the wake of changing neighborhoods and more transient populations, MT helps build a community of non-judgmental peers bound together by a sense of camaraderie that keep each other company resulting in this simple yet significant message: "you are not alone." This message, a defense against the experiences of isolation, loneliness, and lack of community that plague new mothers, enables women to imagine that they might just get through this, whether "this" refers to negative emotions surrounding motherhood or full-blown PPD.

"We're Gonna Get Through This"

Connecting with a community of other mothers enabled women to believe that they could get through the struggles they were experiencing as new mothers. Women reported that membership with MT left them experiencing improved mental health.

Improved mental health. Mothers suggested that the support provided through Momstown benefitted their mental health and enabled them to feel better equipped to cope with their depression, anxiety, and other low moments of motherhood. As (Helene, PPD-SYM) describes: "Oh you just feel like a different person. You feel like you, you're not just a mom anymore. Even though you are one. You feel like a human being again." Participants noted they felt more confident as mothers after joining MT. Meredith (PPD-SYM) stated: "It makes me feel better about myself. I'm less self-conscious and I'm more confident." Several women reported they would not have survived their depression without this community of other mothers. Jo (PPD-FD) explains: "It means just somewhere I can go to feel good about myself. I suffer from postpartum depression and I honestly I wouldn't have survived the first year without a group of women that I could talk to and depend on and who could get me out of the house and keep me busy and you know, keep my mind off of all the bad stuff that was going through my head." And women also suggested

that MT could be a powerful tool in the prevention and treatment of PPD. Margaret (PPD-FD) argued: "The whole focus is connecting neighbourhood moms and finding someone in your neighbourhood and finding someone in the same life space that you are…. And it doesn't matter if it's your first baby or your third baby. It still happens … the number one way to prevent [PPD] is peer to peer support and you could have a fabulous husband and a fabulous mother and lots of friends, but if there isn't, you have a two month old, you need to find someone else with a two month old to connect. And that's the number one way to avoid postpartum depression." Participants argued today's mothers need a service like MT. Kristen (PPD-FD) describes:

> *What MT has done, and like I would be the first, I'm not a public speaker, but I'd be the first person up there to say, you need to put funding into this so moms don't have to pay for it … I'm wholeheartedly on board for something to be done because they say one in five have postpartum. I think they're a little off on that. I think there's more than that … 'Cause people don't report it all the time …. I think the government should get involved because what [the creator] has done is just incredible…. I think every community needs to have a MT. Every woman should join a group like MT. Because who knows how, if I even would have had postpartum depression if I was involved with something like this with Abby … maybe the severity of it wouldn't have been as bad.*

At the very least, these mothers suggest that MT might lessen the intensity of postpartum depression, and that is a significant step toward treating and preventing the illness.

Discussion

Our study of MT members contributes to the literature an alternative PPD intervention. Research has demonstrated women want alternatives to medication and traditional forms of therapy, and physicians and other health professionals want to help their clients find these interventions, but ultimately have "no services to which to refer women for further treatment" (Chew-Graham 1). The use of social media such as MT to strengthen women's social support networks, could be employed in conjunction with other forms of PPD treatment to create more integrative care for women experiencing the illness. This would address the call for PPD treatments that focus on interdisciplinary collaborations between health professionals, clients, and community (Kennedy; Posmontier and Waite). Our research suggests that, though it is far from a "quick fix," MT does offer women an alternative postpartum intervention that has been

reported to combat symptoms of postpartum depression and defend against the development of the illness.

Our research also speaks to the need for postpartum interventions that address community and social support as a major risk factor in the development of PPD (Sword et al.). The literature demonstrates repeatedly that a lack of social support is a major predictor of PPD (O'Hara), that we cannot rely solely on spouses and immediate family to support women with PPD (Davey et al.), and that we need to put new social structures in place that will support all new mothers and protect them during the postpartum period (Zelkowitz). Support groups have been shown to be beneficial for new mothers, but are often based around breastfeeding (such as the Le Leche League (http://www.lllc.ca/), which has the potential to exclude many new mothers, including those whose PPD symptoms coincided with trouble breastfeeding (Scrandis). Support groups based around PPD are also helpful, but are often poorly attended due to the social stigma attached to the illness (Abrams et al.). Furthermore, women with PPD report finding formal therapeutic environments too "intimidating" (Abrams et al.) and that they would rather talk to a "a friend than a counsellor" (Chew-Graham et al.). Studies have advised that building up a new mother's social network should be a "high priority" for health care providers, yet the literature is not clear on how exactly health care providers are to do this (Leahy-Warren et al.). MT addresses these concerns raised in the literature by offering a new social structure for women in the postpartum period that builds community where community was lacking, provides social support beyond spouses and extended family, and guards against social isolation. This service is not based around breastfeeding or any specific parenting ideology, nor is it based specifically around mental health, and women reported MT to be uniquely non-judgmental; these attributes might help ease stigma and allow women to feel more comfortable reporting symptoms of PPD. Health care professionals left feeling helpless in their responsibility to grow women's social support networks could easily refer women in their care to this service or facilitate a meeting with a MT member or leader. Such interventions could make a significant change in the lives of women who resoundingly describe motherhood as overwhelming and isolating.

Finally, our research speaks to the need for a uniquely structured peer support network for women with PPD that addresses concerns raised by existing studies of PPD peer support systems. Peer support has been touted in the literature as a "significant element in the delivery of quality care" in a health care system that is overburdened and often unresponsive to the needs of women with PPD (Dennis "Peer Support" 322). Dennis' study ("Preventing Postpartum Depression") of a mother-to-mother telephone support network for women with PPD is a sterling example of a successful peer support intervention; however, women

involved in the study complained of inadequate "matches" with peer volunteers, and they identified several changes they would like to see including face-to-face interaction and online access to peer support. Our study reveals that the unique structure of MT addresses these concerns raised by existing PPD peer support literature. Through MT, mothers reported making their own "matches", both online and face-to-face, and finding women they felt truly comfortable with as peers. Mothers described feeling a sense of camaraderie with fellow MT members, compounded by the feeling that MT was a safe, non-judgmental space to share experiences and advice about mothering.

Our study, however, is not without its limitations. Although the response from this study was largely positive, mothers' groups can also impact negatively on women's experiences of motherhood (Dennis and Chung-Lee; Mauthner; Mulcahy, Parry and Glover). Our group of participants is also relatively small; further studies of PPD and social networking sites like MT are needed to ascertain their effectiveness. And although our participants comprised women who were relatively diverse in terms of social identity, we were unable to perform an analysis that spoke specifically to experiences of women marginalized due to race, class, sexuality, age, disability, marital status, and so forth. Furthermore, future research on the use of social networking sites for women with PPD should explore barriers to accessing these services such as income barriers (especially relevant in reference to the $45.00 membership fee associated with MT), language barriers, transportation barriers, or a lack of access to the internet. Investigating mothers' internet access is particularly important given the existence of a 'digital divide' (Blackburn, Read and Hughes) between socio-economically advantaged and disadvantaged groups, which often corresponds to race and ethnicity (Brodie, Flournoy, Altman, Blendon, Benson, and Rosenbaum; Fox and Livingston).

Conclusion

In sum, our research with MT members found this social networking site, due to its unique structure and provision of peer support, improved mental health for women with PPD and PPD symptoms. Women in this study reported struggling through motherhood alone, isolated, and without community; MT enabled these mothers to feel they were not alone, and that they were, through company, camaraderie, and community, going get through it together. We identified several limitations of this study and suggested further research that if conducted will create a more complex understanding of PPD and the possibilities of online peer support. As Knudson-Martin and Silverstein maintain, "Interventions that focus on developing supportive relationships that can sustain the emotional vicissitudes of childbearing have potential to empower

rather than silence women … such interventions could significantly impact the devastating effect of PPD" (157). Perhaps, then, if used in conjunction with other forms of PPD prevention and treatment, services like MT might take us one step further to providing women a truly multi-faceted intervention to an unquestionably multi-faceted illness.

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HALLIE PALLADINO

Motherhood's Opening Chapter

Birth Stories as Performance and Counter Performance Across Dueling Media Platforms

Women in our culture are heavily exposed to both social media and reality television shows, tending to regard each as potential sources of information about birth. In this paper I examine the ways that birth stories are transmitted across these dueling media platforms asking what these vastly divergent portrayals of childbirth communicate to women about their birthing bodies. Extending Della Pollack's theory of performance and counter performance as a theoretical framework for my discussion, I argue that mother-authored birth stories shared on pregnancy message boards can be understood as a collective textual performance revealing much about the ways in which women experience childbirth under our current maternity care system. In contrast, I identify the genre of childbirth reality television as a destructive counter performance of women's lived experiences. These in turn inform public discourse about pregnancy and birth with broad implications in a range of ongoing debates over matters such as: Where should women be legally permitted to give birth? How should decisions be made during labor? And to what extent should institutions and governments be granted authority to regulate women's choices during pregnancy and labor?

In the era of social childbirth, women had opportunities to learn about birth by attending the labors of their friends and neighbors (Wertz and Wertz; Leavitt). In our time, when birth happens mostly in private, women desirous to know what really happens at a birth must rely on birth stories. It is perhaps then not surprising that birth stories have gone public, very public, in two completely divergent formats. Against the backdrop of today's ethos of personal sharing, mother-authored birth stories are being uploaded en masse to social media where they are being archived in high concentration on pregnancy message boards. At the same time the mass media produces an entire genre of childbirth

themed reality television programs. These in turn inform public discourse about pregnancy and birth with broad implications in a range of ongoing debates over matters such as: Where should women be legally permitted to give birth? How should decisions be made during labor? And to what extent should institutions and governments be granted authority to regulate women's choices during pregnancy and labor?[1]

In *Telling Bodies Performing Birth: Everyday Narratives of Childbirth*, Della Pollack considers spoken birth stories as performance. "Looping through multiple performativities, birth stories threaten not only the conventional isolation of birth from other episodes in the formation of cultural identity but also the concomitant isolation of birth from the broader body politics of, for instance, abortion, sexual orientation, reproductive technologies, 'family values,' welfare and healthcare reform" (Pollack 8). She theorizes that because they have such powerful disruptive potential birth stories must be "counter performed…circumscribed, discredited, pushed to the margins of discursive practice, whether by pejorative identification with 'gossip,' 'lore,' and 'anecdote' or by the use of anesthetics that either remove the birthing woman from her body, and her body from its story, or make her body—and so her story—conform to prescribed medical narratives" (Pollack 10).

Extending Pollack's theory of performance and counter performance as a theoretical framework for my discussion, I argue that mother-authored birth stories shared on pregnancy message boards can be understood as a collective textual performance. Using these online forums women reenact their birth in a public, yet largely anonymous, forum. Women perform these stories in dialogue with neighboring stories, comprising a public conversation read by an audience of thousands.[2] In contrast, I identify the genre of childbirth reality television as a destructive counter performance of women's lived experiences, offered up to the public in the guise of educational entertainment. These programs co-opt women's stories, editing them to conform to a rigid storyline in which laboring women and their babies must be rescued by technology (Morris and McInerney; Stevenson). As researchers are discovering, merely viewing these programs has been shown to increase women's fear (Declerq et al.; Lothian and Grauer; Stoll and Hall) and there are indications they may also decrease their sense of agency (Rink).

Women in our culture are heavily exposed to social media and reality television shows, tending to regard both as potential sources of information about birth (Declercq et al. *New Mothers Speak Out*; Lagan, Sinclair and Kernohan; Rink). In this paper I examine the messages that both social media performance and mass media counter performance of birth narratives communicate to women about their birthing bodies, as well as what they reveal about the ways in which women experience childbirth under our current maternity care system.

From Social Childbirth to Social Media

When birth moved from home to hospital much of the childbirth knowledge traditionally known to women was lost (Wertz and Wertz; Leavitt). As Leavitt observed in her 1986 history of American childbirth, "Many women, realizing that their lack of knowledge distances them from their own bodies, are trying to recover some of that lost knowledge through self-education" (217). For women today, sharing stories of their personal experiences online is an important component of this self-education. Pregnancy message boards offer community around the experience of pregnancy and childbirth. Frequented by women of all ages, races and cultural backgrounds these message boards are nothing if not heterogeneous. They are of the dominant culture and yet support thriving countercultures. Stories posted here are unedited; they conform to no script. Read collectively, these high volume archives of birth stories cover the entire spectrum of birth experiences. Not only do they function as a type of searchable catalogue depicting all manner of pregnancy and labor complication, they also represent a wide range of individual preferences and philosophical approaches to birth.

But birth stories are more than first person accounts of an individual mother's experience of labor and delivery. Women's choices during labor are heavily influenced by prevailing societal attitudes about how birth ought to or ought not to happen. Each mother's story is colored by social perceptions about birth she may have internalized, the details of her birth plan if she has made one and the substance of her birth fantasies and fears. Her birth story will additionally incorporate any medical information given to her by birth practitioners including justifications for any interventions offered and whether or not she accepted or refused. Her perspective on this information will depend on the relationship she has with her birth attendants, whether or not she experienced shared decision making during labor and, perhaps most crucially, whether her rights as a laboring woman were fully respected (Bylund; Callister; Pollack; Declerq et al.) Birth stories reflect the extent of their author's acceptance of, resistance to, or ambivalence toward mainstream social norms.

This poses a problem for readers of message board birth stories, in particular their primary audience of expectant and post-partum mothers. These readers are seeking information about childbirth and its aftermath for practical reasons.[3] The quality and accuracy of any medical information and birth wisdom contained in any birth story is only as good as the information possessed by its author, leaving readers to decide for themselves about the soundness of each other's reasoning: Is skipping a planned induction a good idea? Should I embrace or decline fetal monitoring? Do I really need those IV antibiotics? Further complicating matters is the fact that birth practitioners don't always

follow best practices (Declercq et al. *Pregnancy and Birth*; Gaskin), but it is impossible to tell definitively from reading stories which interventions were truly indicated. Was that episiotomy really necessary? Did that baby really need to be put under that heat lamp? Readers can only speculate. Nevertheless, read in sufficient volume, these stories touch on all the things that can go right, and all the things that can go horribly wrong, giving readers a good overview of how birth happens.

On BabyCenter, the world's largest social media site for pregnant women and mothers, new users join large message boards, called birth boards, populated by women due to give birth in a particular month.[4] These boards are places where users can post any pregnancy question or comment they like. At the top of the first page there is always a birth announcement/story thread which may contain anywhere from 800-1000 birth stories of varying lengths. Membership on each board is usually around 20,000-24,000 meaning that about 3-5 percent of mothers post stories on their main birth board[5] where anyone with an Internet connection can view them.[6]

The format of these message boards lend themselves to being read in volume.[7] Stories are easy to scroll and organized chronologically. Women join the birth boards at the beginning of their pregnancies and post birth stories when their pregnancies come to an end. The result is that at the very top of the thread, mothers memorialize pregnancies lost to miscarriage. These are followed by stories of babies who were born too early to survive, often accompanied by heartbreaking photographs. Next come stories of extremely premature babies fighting for their lives in the neonatal intensive care unit. These babies have tiny wrinkled faces obscured by masks and tubes. Stories often conclude with a request for prayers. As readers scroll further they come to the stories of babies born at higher birth weights and gestational ages; cheeks get fuller and thighs get plumper but many still require extra hospitalization.[8] Full term babies start to appear sixty or seventy stories deep into the thread. But, because loss can occur at any gestational age, readers never know as they scroll what type of story they may encounter next.[9] This chronological structure compels readers to confront the possibility of pregnancy loss, extreme prematurity, stillbirth, infant death and a wide variety of medical challenges ranging in severity.[10]

By the time the reader arrives at stories of babies born after about thirty-six weeks there begins to be a marked shift in narrative focus. Chubby cheeks and bright eyes illustrate stories of these more or less routine—though not always wonderful—births. Here the experience of the birthing woman shifts into the foreground. Although many of these stories have commonalities, they vary significantly in content and tone. How women feel about their birth has a lot to do with who was there, how they were treated and whether or not things

went more or less according to plan (Callister; Pollack; Declerq et al.). Some women planned natural labors and it all worked out, for others did not. Some were counting on an epidural but arrived too late in labor to get one. There are stories of breech babies, back labor, stuck shoulders and retained placentas. There are stories of homebirths and hospital births and births planned for one that happened in the other. Stories are told of uncontrollable shaking, unwanted episiotomies, the misery of magnesium, the perils of Pitocin.[11] Some are funny, some sarcastic, some inspiring and some enraging.

These mother-authors chose to publish their stories among hundreds of others in a place where they are sure to be read, felt and understood by hundreds if not thousands of other women. Mothers recount their experiences in the context of each other's stories. In these ways, posting stories becomes part of a collective performance of birth for an audience of heavily invested readers. A large part of the audience for these stories are experiencing pregnancy at the same time and encountering these stories at the very moment they are most personally relevant.

These mother-narrated birth stories are comprised of a complex blend of physical, emotional and social experience unique to their teller. They are documents of women's lived experiences. They are vital communications from one mother to another, informing, instructing, forewarning. They can be cathartic for the teller, a way to air frustrations or process traumatic experience (Callister). They can be celebratory, joyful, dramatic, frightening and illuminating—often all of these things and more (Pollack; Gaskin). And while birth stories cannot predict what birth *will* be like for any given woman, they do reveal what birth *has* been like for real mothers. Irreducible, these first person accounts defy generalization, encapsulating the true reality of birth, freshly remembered.

A Distorted Reality

As women share their birth stories with a global audience on the internet, the mass media is broadcasting a very different version, an entire genre of reality television programs that are dedicated to sensationalizing women's experience of birth and repackaging them as entertainment. Consistent with Pollack's theory that birth stories must be counter performed, these programs are not simply a retelling, rather they are an un-telling. When women are removed as narrators of their own stories, as in the case of third person-narrated televised accounts, mothers are placed in the object position as the reliability of their physical, psychological and emotional experiences are called into question (Morris and McInerney; Rink). The irony of these programs is that even as they promise to make viewers first person witnesses through eyes of the camera, they obscure

and erase the authentic experiences of the women they feature.

While the drama of labor has long been a film and television staple, what sets reality shows apart is their promise to bring viewers into a real delivery room. It is understandable then that 65 percent of the women in the Childbirth Connection study reported watching reality shows about childbirth during their pregnancies for informational purposes (Declercq et al. *New Mothers Speak Out* 83-84). A few of these programs, past and present, include: *Babies Special Delivery* (CBS), *A Baby Story* (TLC), *Birth Day* (Discovery Health), *One Born Every Minute* (Lifetime) and *I Didn't Know I Was Pregnant* (TLC). Other variations on the childbirth genre have included shows featuring runway models (*Runway Moms* on Discovery Health), pregnant teenagers (*Teen Mom* on MTV) and affluent New Yorkers (*Pregnant in Heels* on Bravo).

Attempting to learn about birth through the filter of reality shows can be extremely misleading and even potentially damaging to women's perceptions about birth. In their 2010 study, *Media Representations of Pregnancy and Childbirth: An Analysis of Reality Television Programs in the United States,* Theresa Morris and Katherine McInerney analyzed one-hundred and twenty-three births on eighty-five episodes of popular reality shows. The authors reported that, "The reality-based birth television shows that we analyzed made pregnancy and childbirth much more dramatic and perilous than they are in reality." Playing up the damaging trope of the hysterical woman in labor, "Women without pain medication were often represented not only as suffering through labor, but also as being 'out of control'." Additionally, laboring women were routinely "treated like children," given misinformation about their care and denied informed consent. Or, at least that is how it seemed on camera. Worse, some physicians talked about them behind their back to the cameras, second-guessing their decisions and even mocking them. For instance, in the case of one mother who had chosen a drug free delivery, her doctor seemed supportive in the room, but went outside and told the cameras smugly he knew she would eventually "give in." She didn't. Another mother who had a cesarean scheduled due to a breech presentation was *still* delivered surgically when her baby turned head down, although there was no medical need for it. The doctors reasoned that she had already "accepted the idea" of surgical birth so she might as well go through with it. Morris and McInerney conclude:

> We suggest that these reality television programs help to understand how American women come to think about and understand pregnancy and childbirth. "Reality" shows depict women as powerless, physicians in control, and technology as the saving grace for women's imperfect bodies. (140)

In this genre, mothers' voices are drowned out first by a medical establishment that appears to find their requests to control the conditions under which they labor bothersome, and second by producers who insert their own commentary, often scrutinizing and judging each mother as they co-opt her personal story. Mothers are not the protagonists in this genre, and they are "sometimes blamed for problems they may have experienced in pregnancy and birth, suggesting a punitive surveillance approach to care" (Morris and McInerney 136).

This has disturbing implications. These shows make it easy for viewers to dismiss laboring women as incompetent to make decisions for themselves and their babies. Mothers who aren't acquiescent risk scorn, ridicule and punishment. The *Listening to Mothers III* survey reported 23 percent of women have refrained from asking questions of their healthcare provider for "fear of being labeled difficult" (Declercq et al. *Pregnancy and Birth* 8). This concern that hospital staff might view assertive mothers as difficult is reinforced by the way that childbirth is dramatized on these shows. Reality shows almost universally promote a highly interventionist model of birth that decreases young women's feelings of agency in regard to the birth process. In her study of young women who have never given birth, Rink found "Viewing *[One Born Every Minute]* may cultivate negative attitudes about childbirth, including women's agency and anxiety toward birth" (54). Unlike reading a first person account where every step of the way the reader is in the mother's shoes, watching reality shows distances women from the experience of the mother whose labor they glimpse.

Imposing Guilt and Shame Onto Mother's Narratives

One blatant example of this can be found on Discovery Health's *I Didn't Know I Was Pregnant* (2008-2011). Episodes feature interview footage of actual mothers spliced into dramatizations featuring actresses who are similar looking, but just slightly more attractive than their real life counterparts which produces an uncanny double vision effect. Just as jarring is the disembodied third-person voiceover that drives the whole narrative with its heavily judgmental tone, second-guessing mothers' accounts and choices and ensuring that the producers of the show always have the final word. An episode from the show's second season called, "Home Alone" features Tiffany, a woman suffering from severe polycystic ovarian syndrome who had long thought it would be impossible for her to conceive. So accustomed to the pain of rupturing cysts, she is not surprised when she started to suffer terrible abdominal cramps, without ever having realized she was pregnant, she gives birth unassisted in her bathroom. Or, as the show's voice over booms, "After days of unimaginable pain, Tiffany makes the horrifying discovery that the source of her agony is not from a rupturing ovarian cyst."

The birth is difficult and she fears for her life and the life of her unexpected son, but once she hears her baby's first cry Tiffany gets practical. She clamps and cuts the umbilical cord, wraps up her newborn and crawls into bed where she spends the next few days recovering from her ordeal. "I nursed him, and I just laid down with him, and we slept for what had to be hours." Here, the voice-over interrupts, "Despite the life-threatening events, Tiffany makes an unusual decision. 'And I didn't call 911. The doctor said I was probably in shock…. The next day, I cleaned some of the mess, some of the blood. I knew eventually I would have to go to the hospital. I just wasn't ready yet. And I felt guilty because, I think I just wanted to be with him until my husband came home [from a business trip]'."

When her husband Mark does arrive, he accuses her of stealing the baby. Only after he sees the mess in the bathroom does he accept Tiffany's story. He brings them both to the hospital where she is admonished until she is terrified. It is discovered that she has preeclampsia, and her blood pressure is extremely high, something she had no way of knowing, having received no prenatal care. While doctors might understandably be upset if a patient knew about a pregnancy and neglected to get prenatal care, the reason Tiffany had no prenatal care was because, as the title of the show reminds us, she didn't know she was pregnant. Nevertheless, upon being diagnosed with preeclampsia she is not treated empathically and she is subject to accusations of bad mothering. This is consistent with Morris and McInerney's observation about punitive surveillance.

The doctors take Tiffany's baby away for an examination she is not allowed to attend. "Probably took two hours until they came back and said, 'okay, the baby's fine' you'll, uh, be able to take him home today, in fact." She returns to her positive memories adding, "It felt wonderful just when I was holding him and nursing him and thinking that I had no idea that I would be a mom." But Mark, echoes the hospital's attitude when he says damningly in his wife's presence, "My son [could have been] dead." He says this in a way that seems to implicate Tiffany, perhaps implying that she might not hold their son's life as dear as he does. This interpretation contradicts Tiffany's own account of praying on the bathroom floor in the final throes of labor that God spare her child, if necessary in place of herself. "I was praying, 'Please, just let him live. Even if I don't, just please let this baby.'" But for the cameras, Tiffany conforms to the script, "I still feel guilty."

In the process of bringing her birth story to television, Tiffany birth's narrative is revised several times. Still, traces remain of her original story of how she experienced the birth emotionally and physically. Through recounting her story Tiffany is forced to change her narrative to reflect the opinions of others. Her first account of the birth included many emotions; fear, pain and surprise

followed by a genuine delight in mothering. A subsequent gloss in which guilt is the prominent emotion is super-imposed upon her original recollection. The narrative arc of the program pushes her to judge not only her own actions, but also ultimately to dismiss her authentic emotional experience.

Disregarding the Rights of Laboring Women

The very act of editing birth narratives for television requires replacing women as narrators of their own stories, whether they are played for shock value as in *I Didn't Know I Was Pregnant,* or simply played up for medical drama as on shows like *One Born Every Minute* (Lifetime). Four minutes into the premiere episode of the U.S. version of this show, a nurse named Deb tells the camera that she sees a 90 percent epidural rate in her job and explains she thinks this is a great thing. Why would women want to feel what she describes as "the worst pain of your life"?[12] A few minutes later a second nurse is outrageously condescending to a second-time mother who has just checked in. The patient is a twenty-six year old African American woman accompanied by her own mother. When the nurse asks her how a cervical check went the patient says she was told she is at, "Two [centimeters] and a fingertip." The nurse says rudely that this "doesn't make any sense." When the nurse hears that her new patient has refused a C-section the doctor recommended based only on the reason that her first baby was "big." The nurse asks again in a very sarcastic way, "And is [your doctor] confident you can do this vaginally?" Making it sound as if the nurse isn't confident at all, even though she has only just met this mother. She follows up with, "And are you going to do an epidural when appropriate?" It is more of a command than a question. The young woman says, "No. It just slowed me down the last time." The nurse insists in a patronizing and smug voice, "But if you time that epidural correctly it's not gonna slow you down." The stage is set for a big standoff between sneering nurses and a vulnerable young mother of color. How much more difficult will it be for this mother to ask for what she needs during labor when she has already been treated so badly during the check-in process? This is additionally troubling because African American women are the most likely group to report watching childbirth related television (Declercq et al. *New Mothers Speak Out* 58). Rink's analysis of the show further revealed that 50 percent of the African American women featured on the first season of the program were given a C-section (Rink 43). The nurse's audience is clearly the camera and the laboring mother is almost a prop, not a patient. The show is filmed from the medical staff's point of view and the audience is encouraged to feel superior to the patients. No wonder viewers, especially perhaps young mothers, single mothers and mothers of

color, might feel more frightened of giving birth after watching this program.

What programs like the ones described above have in common is that they are putting a laboring women on trial for the viewing audience. These shows invite viewers to applaud those who submit to interventions and regulations as good mothers, ridicule women who resist these as uncooperative and hysterical and laugh at women who try to take an active role during labor. In this way, these damaging counter performances serve to undermine women's authentic experiences of birth.

Learning from Birth Stories: Potential and Limitations

Writing about the potential clinical applications of birth story research, Lynn Clark Callister stresses that only through listening to mothers and learning from their stories can we gain the knowledge necessary to repair what is broken in our flawed maternity care system. In their statement on "The Rights of Childbearing Women," the Childbirth Connection summarizes its discouraging but unsurprising finding that: "Childbearing women frequently are not aware of their legal right to make health care choices on behalf of themselves and their babies, and do not exercise this right."[13] If women are ever going to be empowered to exercise control over the circumstances of their labor, they need to be aware that there is often a gap between best practices and common practices. As Bylund found in her 2005 analysis of several hundred mother-authored birth stories posted on the (now defunct) BirthStories.com, participation in decision making during the birth process is correlated with women describing their birth experience more positively.[14] Alarmingly, women only reported being part of the decision making process in about 57 percent of the stories in her initial sample. The disregard for the rights of laboring women negatively affects birth outcomes. But women themselves are providing the raw material for change in the form of their stories. In her guidelines for providers on promoting positive birth experiences Callister emphasizes the value of collecting birth stories as a routine part of postpartum care, "As childbearing women have the opportunity to share their birth stories, such interviews can be used not only for collecting narrative data for analysis (Frank) but also as a nursing assessment and intervention in themselves" (Callister 516). Conversely, perhaps new findings about the negative impact of reality shows on women's confidence in their body's capabilities could become known to the public in a way that may mitigate this effect.

As historian Judith Leavitt remarks "childbirth cannot successfully be reduced to one kind of an experience and at the same time satisfy the wide range of expectations women bring to it. The diversity that women seek will continue to reflect the difference of the women themselves" (Leavitt 218). That is to

say that the attempted homogenization of childbirth has failed, women need to be allowed to birth in the way that makes the most sense for them both physiologically and spiritually. Mother-authored birth stories are valuable because they can help us approach a more complete understanding of how childbirth happens in our culture. These stories contain the raw information that can inform new research into how women's knowledge and perceptions influence birth outcomes. The very fact that they are being told indicates that women are ready not only to reeducate themselves about birth but also to reclaim authority over their own birthing bodies.

[1]This is an urgent problem in the U.S. especially where the rights and even freedom of pregnant women are often jeopardized. One disturbing example was the 2010 case of Samantha Burton who at 25 weeks pregnant was told by a doctor to go on bed rest. When she decided to get a second opinion. The doctor went to a judge and got a court order forcing her to go on bed rest under hospital supervision and further to submit to any medical treatment her doctor decided was in the best interest of the fetus. She was not allowed to transfer to a different hospital when she requested it because it was decided it would be bad for the fetus. Her pregnancy ended in miscarriage. The ACLU took her case and her rights were upheld.

[2]Although birth stories can be found online in many places such blogs, Facebook and even Twitter, in this paper I am going to focus specifically on the rapidly growing archives of birth stories posted on pregnancy message boards.

[3]The secondary audience for online birth stories is comprised of researchers, activists, theorists, policy makers and even birth practitioners themselves.

[4]I focus my discussion on BabyCenter because this is the most popular website for pregnant women worldwide with 40 million users. BabyCenter claims that 7/10 U.S. babies and 6/10 Canadian babies born last year were "BabyCenter babies." BabyCenter, owned by Johnson & Johnson, hosts the most active and largest pregnancy and birth message boards on the web.

[5]There are many boards for specific types of birth such as Natural Unmedicated Childbirth, V-bac, multiples, teen mothers, military mothers, etc. Many mothers may stop participating in their birth boards to join these smaller communities as they become more familiar with the site. It is difficult to estimate the percentage of women who post birth stories site-wide due to this fact. This is a potential area for future research.

[6]Researching this subject I primarily read stories on the U.S. version of BabyCenter. But there are also versions of BabyCenter in Canada, the UK, Australia, and dozens of other countries. This could be very important resource for researchers doing a cross-national comparison of birth practices.

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TAMAR HAGER AND OMRI HERZOG

The Battle of Bad Mothers

The Film *Mama* as a Commentary on the Judgment of Solomon and on Contemporary Motherhood

The modern horror film genre has incessantly dealt with questions of parenthood, pregnancy and the status of mothers, particularly with "bad mothers."From the heart of popular culture, horror films engage in these issues unexpectedly, and sometimes even radically. These films enable us to recognize cultural taboos and to expose secrets that are not expressed in other genres. In this article, we examine the successful horror film, Mama *(2013) that centres on two "bad mothers" involved in a fatal conflict over two girls. Through a comparison between* Mama *and the biblical myth of the judgment of Solomon, with which it dialogues and comments upon, we investigate the cultural hierarchy existing between two types of bad mothers, whom we term the "overfeeding mother" and the "starving mother." The film disassembles and deconstructs this cultural hierarchy, while clarifying its social motivations. Proposing a radical alternative to Solomon's judgment, the movie challenges the prevalent conception of bad mothering by exposing both mothers' human faces, hence acquitting them in the eyes of the viewers.*

The horror film *Mama* was one of the most profitable films of 2013. It was produced on a low budget by Hollywood standards (15 million dollars), but earned ten times that much at the box office, and was distributed in more than 45 countries around the world: from Peru to Hong Kong, from Australia to Iceland.[1] Its commercial success was not obvious, as it does not center on a schematic war between forces of good and evil, and has no abundance of spectacular effects. The film focuses on the domestic realm; it places two stepmothers against each other, both wanting to gain possession over two small orphan girls. What did the movie expose that frightened and excited viewers all over the world?

In this paper, we suggest that the movie achieved its success due to its distinctive representations of bad motherhood. As we demonstrate, the modern horror film genre has incessantly dealt with questions of parenthood, pregnancy and particularly with "bad mothers" (Arnold 4). As in other horror films, *Mama* enables us to recognize and challenge cultural taboos concerning motherhood. Yet its subversive representations of the maternal are distinctive in contemporary popular culture.

The paper delves into the alternative visions of bad mothering outlined by the film, depicting it as a modern version of one of the best known biblical stories, the judgment of Solomon (1 Kings 3: 16-28).[2] The biblical story centers on a "custody battle" between two mothers, each claiming that the child is hers. Although in the bible story the distinction between the good mother (who is the biological mother) and the bad mother (pretending to be the biological mother) is unequivocally decided as evidence of King Solomon's wisdom, *Mama* presents a more ambivalent and complex interpretation of the ancient myth. The custody battle in the film takes place between two bad mothers, which makes it difficult for the viewers to fill the role of Solomon, to judge between them and to reorganize the world in schemas of good and evil.

Through the comparison between the film and the biblical myth, the paper investigates the cultural hierarchy existing between two cultural representations of bad mothers, whom we term the "overfeeding mother" and the "starving mother." As we will show, the film disassembles and deconstructs those representations, while clarifying their social motivations in contemporary culture.

Subversion and the Horror Genre

In the past decades, mothers have become central characters in popular horror films (Arnold 4). That is because, perhaps more than any other genre, in the modern era, horror serves to bypass explicit and hidden censorship which dictates what can be told, in whose name, and what the limits of the legitimate story are. In the depth structure of horror stories, there are cultural and psychological secrets which popular culture tends to blur or to place in a legitimate narrative framework, foreknown and often deceptive (Hills 91). The obsessive concern in horror films with questions of parenthood make it possible to expose and report threatening, frightening and violent aspects of modern parenthood. They supply honest and complex answers to questions like: "Do I necessarily love my child? Do I love him/her unconditionally?" "Am I a good parent?" "Am I harming my child?" or "Am I afraid of him/her?" Other popular avenues, such as romantic comedies or family dramas, present an array of fraudulent clichés: "Every parent loves his/her children," "Real love is unconditional," "Children are true bliss," "Being a parent is a magical journey into self fulfillment." These

platitudes restrain or silence the potential complex responses to these questions. At the heart of popular culture, horror plays a subversive role: it presents either implied or obvious anxieties considered taboo in other cultural channels.

This role stems from the position of horror in the modern world in contrast with the drama of Enlightenment. This drama creates a unified subject who discovers himself under the tutelage of science and reason, far from the transgressive powers of metaphysics. At the center of the modern secular story is the journey by a person who fulfills herself and finds her voice by means of belief in individualism and autonomy, striving towards status and emotional advancement, and accumulating knowledge of herself and her world (Sennet 91). According to the modern initiation story, a person must recognize his abilities and his future prospects and strive to realize them using his reason (Botting 14).

Modern horror is a mishap in this meta-narrative. In the laboratory where the enlightened subject is supposed to be created, the lab instruments are damaged and a disordered monster, a parasitic subject, defective, bent and dark, is created. This monstrous subject is connected to illogical external forces beyond its control or recognition, famished, full of lust, unprecedented, unrestrained, and defying censorship (Gooda 790). Modern horror represents freedom that has been lost in a modern-scientific world: the freedom to be monstrous, mythic, transgressive and hybrid. These are the heroes of horror: ghosts or shadows, who slyly and suddenly appear over the shoulder of the enlightened subject and reveal the illusion of the credibility of his reason (Herzog & Yaron).

For this reason, horror is the genre embodiment of criticism of enlightenment: it fully reveals the secret of the inability to create a subject and his world as stable, hermetic, "natural", obvious and coherent. It undermines knowledge structures, myths and recognized images, related for example to the essence of the individual, the family, childhood, motherhood, the home and the community. It cracks the totality of the seemingly stable surface of cultural structures. Indeed, it is always the happy normal family that has moved into the haunted house; it is always the functioning vibrant community in which the deadly virus breaks out; it is always the independent benevolent subject who unintentionally releases what is buried under the surface. Horror presents popular narrative which intersects with the discourse of post-structuralism, in that it challenges the stability of existing structures, is always located in their margins, closely examines their certainties and undermines their existence.

What is Frightening in Motherhood?

The modern horror texts—from *The Turn of the Screw* to *The Ring*—deal continuously with the experience of pregnancy, birth and raising children. Its

literary and cinema products investigate the cultural myths constituting these experiences, and undercut the rigid cultural interpretation that charges them with emotional meaning. But before we investigate how motherhood is presented in the movie *Mama*, as a popular commentary on modern motherhood, we will try to briefly distinguish between the "good mother" and the "bad mother," a distinction that will be the basis of this discussion.

Aminatta Forna terms the array of norms, and social and psychological demands from mothers in a given time and space as "the myth of motherhood". According to this modern myth, motherhood is a natural instinct and thus the ideal mother is a biological one.[3] However, although biology serves as a necessary condition, it is not sufficient to create the perfect mother (Forna 4). A "good mother" is the principal caregiver to her children, and they must take precedence over her other obligations. She loves them unconditionally, but at the same time, she avoids suffocating them with her love. She must understand the psychological needs of her children (and part of her role is to read literature on the subject or to be assisted by professionals in the field), and to grant them space for independence and autonomy. She will make every sacrifice for them, but will also know not to be too protective. She organizes her work around the needs of her children who are the first of her priorities, but simultaneously, she is faithful to the capitalistic ideology as she must be their role model in aiming for self-fulfillment and professional satisfaction. The children of the good mother are independent, have self-esteem and function as productive citizens, but also feel protected and unconditionally loved (see, for example, Chase and Rogers 30; Douglas and Michaels 6; Forna 3; Rich 13-14).

The myth of the good mother, which exists in all popular cultural arenas, is thoroughly imbued with contradictions and is actually impossible; it turns mothers into haunted women. Generations of mothers feel that any wrong movement or incorrect reaction can cause their child irreparable damage, writes Ariella Friedman. There has been no way to fulfill all of the demands required from the ideal mother. Mothers have been accused of not giving enough love or giving too much love; of not providing the child with enough attention, or not being able to let him go. "Guilt feelings have become a dominant component in the experience of motherhood" (Friedman 192). According to Susan J. Chase and Meredith W. Michaels "motherhood has become a psychological police state" (6).

Against the cultural campaign of the good mother, the bad mother lies in wait, as a warning signal. Most feminist research about motherhood relates to this figure by describing specific cases of mothers who abused, abandoned, neglected or even murdered their children (see LaddTaylor and Imansky 1-30; Rich, 256-280; Forna 185-193; Douglas and Michaels 140-172), but they have difficulty in supplying a comprehensive description of a "bad mother".

The common assumption according to which a good mother is the "natural" identity of normal women and "unconditional love" is an instinctive feminine compulsion, leads to the fact that behavior which deviates from this identity requires contextual explanations. When women deviate from those social expectations, they are usually presented as psychological or sociological victims (insane or subjects of social injustices) (Naylor 172; Ward 176).

Although research on bad mothers usually refers to abusive or abandoning mothers, "the bad mother" is a threat hovering over normative mothers. Mothers ask themselves (and social systems incessantly ask them) whether they are patient enough, nourishing enough, loving enough—but not too much. The emotional balancing question of relations between mothers and children is an inexhaustible source of neuroses and misery, especially in a reality where women work but are demanded to be completely devoted to their homes and families (Douglas and Michaels 1-13).

Horror films reveal the deep distress, caused by self or external judgment of maternal practices, primarily by presenting mothers who, for various reasons, do not fulfill their role as they should. In her book on mothers in horror movies, Sarah Arnold describes the bad mother in contrast to the good mother: The good mother is characterized by self-sacrifice, devotion, care and sentimentality, while the bad mother is identified with behaviors like over involvement, selfishness and a stifling presence (Arnold 183). The maternal power in these contexts, maintains Arnold, is destructive, primitive, archaic and boundless (ibid 11). But the portrait of the bad mother is more complex. We argue that the representation of maternal evil in horror films complies with one of two patterns: "the overfeeding mother" or "the starving mother."

The overfeeding mother is similar to Arnold's description. She is a mother who nourishes her children with infinite love and devotion, without seeing their needs or leaving them autonomous space. Out of narcissistic need to safeguard her maternal role over time, she allows them to remain dependent and infantile, lacking the ability to make decisions or to judge for themselves. In one of the extreme embodiments of such a mother, the mother dominates her child entirely, even after her death (as in Alfred Hitchcock's film, "Psycho", in which the main character serves his mother offerings of love and murderous loyalty).

The second type of bad mother is "the starving mother". She is a mother who renounces her emotional maternal roles: cold, utilitarian and impatient, she devotes herself to her other obligations (for example, intimate relationships or profession) and views her children as an annoyance and as an obstacle blocking her way. She ignores them or denies their existence; she starves them psychologically and emotionally. In her extreme embodiment, she kills her children (for example, in *The Ring,* where the mother throws her daughter Samara into a well when the girl does not fit her parental expectations) or

abandons her children (like Natasha's mother in *Dark Water* who deserts her daughter and causes her death).

The two conflicting patterns—which embody the extreme positions of "too much" and "too little", in comparison to the norm of the maternal image—share some common characteristics. They are self-absorbed: attentive to their own needs, tending to neglect the demands of their children (for separation and autonomy, or for attention and love).

The Bad Mother vs. the Bad Mother in *Mama*

The uniqueness of the film *Mama* stems from the fact that it deviates from the conventional confrontation between the good and the bad. It presents a duel between two women, neither of whom is a good mother: The two main characters represent two models of the bad mother: the overfeeding mother and the starving mother.

At the beginning of the film, the viewers discover that the biological mother of two little girls, Victoria and Lilly, has been killed by her husband Jeffrey. The murdering father takes his two daughters to an isolated cabin, and there tries to kill them and himself, but a mysterious figure called *Mama* saves the girls, while he vanishes without a trace.

Five years later, his brother Lucas, who has tirelessly searched for the missing girls, finds them in the same cabin with the help of detectives. Lucas tries to take them under his wing, and his life partner, Annabel, unwillingly agrees. A psychologist, who wants to study the girls, offers a house to Lucas and Annabel. But Mama too has arrived at the house, having followed Victoria and Lilly, and her shadow threatens what seems to be the formation of a normative family. The two male heroes are quickly eliminated from the scene (the psychologist has been murdered and Lucas is in a coma). The struggle for possession of the girls takes place between two maternal figures: Mama, the ghost who saved the children from death and has, in effect, adopted them as her daughters while they were living in the cabin, and Annabel—whose motherhood has been forced on her against her will. The struggle is between two stepmothers, and in a society that extols biological motherhood, they are suspect as bad mothers (Forna 4).

This suspicion is justified, at least at first glance. The biography of Mama is outlined roughly: Mama is Edith Brennan, a young woman who was committed to a psychiatric asylum in 1878, under unclear circumstances, and her baby was taken from her. She grabbed him back, and after a short chase, while religious and medical personnel surrounded her, she jumped with her child from a cliff into a deep lake. The baby did not fall into the water and did not die with her: the blanket in which the baby was wrapped snagged on a

branch protruding from the side of the cliff. Mama, now a ghost, is searching for her child, and finds the two girls in the cabin. She adopts them as her daughters, and thus realizes the motherhood which was robbed from her in the past. She saves the girls from their murderous father, nourishes them, plays with them, sings lullabies to them, and assumes complete custody over them, wandering undisturbed through their consciousness. Even when they are taken from the cabin, Mama fights for them; she will harm every patriarchal institution—their biological father, their adoptive uncle, the psychologist or an aunt who represents the social service authorities—which threatens to take them away. They are hers, and hers alone, and their deaths are preferable to handing them over to another mother. *Mama* is the embodiment of the overfeeding mother, whose unconditional love and devotion even extends to the condition of life.

The threat to Mama is another woman, Annabel, a young unkempt rocker who smokes and drinks. In her first scene, she is sitting on the toilet and thanking god that her pregnancy test came out negative. Annabel again and again repeats that she has no interest in motherhood and that she has no maternal feelings. She copes with the children and with her unexpected maternal status only because she wants to maintain her relationship with Lucas and to accede to his emotional needs and his family obligations. She does not play with the children and does not see to their nourishment. When she puts them to sleep, she pats the older girl on her forehead instead of giving her a goodnight kiss and covering her with a blanket. When they refuse to go to sleep, she responds with "whatever" and leaves, and when she understands that there is something mysterious and threatening in the closet, she doesn't even bother to check. She closes the closet door and goes out of the room.

The viewers feel a clear preference for Annabel, the starving mother; Mama, the ghostly over-feeding mother, arouses a recoiling and threatening reaction. This can be explained on two levels: first, Mama signals the deviation and disruption of everything which is human—she was diagnosed as insane even when she was alive and was admitted to an institution; she killed a baby and now she is a threatening ghost; her body and face are distorted and strange. In contrast, Annabel (portrayed by the actress Jessica Chastain) is young, pretty and human; her devotion to her relationship with Lucas, even at the price of unwanted motherhood, arouses empathy.

However, the immediate identification with the "starving" character over the "over-feeder" carries an even deeper meaning. Contemporary capitalist culture poses women's option of abandonment as a maternal practice, as being legitimate. Mothers abandon their children—to a caregiver, in front of a screen, in the educational system—already at an early age. They pay the price of guilt, but this price is low in contrast to the guilt they will feel if they relinquish their

self-fulfillment. The children's self-confidence depends on the satisfaction of their mothers, or so say the popular books on psychology, and if mothers do not realize their potential, their long-term harm to their children will be more significant (Douglas and Michaels, 6). The over-devoted over-feeding mother perceived as a woman who "has no life," that is, in the cultural discourse, she appears from the beginning as a parasitic ghost: she fulfills herself only through her children, and thus lives through them, and forces them to pay the price of her compulsive gifting. In choosing the lesser of the evils, the cultural knowledge structures prefer the mother who starves her children rather than the mother who overfeeds them.

The Overfeeding Mother versus the Starving Mother: The Final Battle

The audience's sympathy for Annabel does not decide the struggle in her favor. The movie makes sophisticated use of the biblical myth of Solomon's judgment, which presents a similar dilemma. The story presents two unmarried women[4] who have given birth three days apart from each other: one has given birth to a dead child, the second to a living baby. However, one of them suspects that the woman who gave birth to the dead child has switched the babies in the middle of the night, and the dead child she is cradling is not really hers. The two mothers stand facing each other before the kingly judge, and each claims that the living infant is hers, word against word. How did the wise king know who the real mother of the living child was?

> And the king said, Bring me a sword. And they brought a sword before the king. And the king said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other. Then spake the woman whose the living child *was* unto the king, for her bowels yearned upon her son, and she said, O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it. But the other said, Let it be neither mine nor thine, *but* divide *it*. Then the king answered and said, Give her the living child, and in no wise slay it: she *is* the mother thereof. And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged; and they feared the king: for they saw that the wisdom of God *was* in him, to do judgment. (1 Kings 3: 24-28)

In the traditional reading of the scene, the wisdom of Solomon was expressed in identifying the good mother, who was, in his determination, the biological mother who cared about the welfare of the child, and thus, was willing to abandon it. The bad mother, the impersonator, was indifferent to the fate of the child and was willing to cut it in half.

An alternative reading of the bible story, suggests viewing it as a child custody struggle between two "bad mothers." The woman who was ready to cut the infant into two is the overfeeding mother, whose love is so lacking in measure, exaggerated and greedy that she prefers the baby's death rather than to give him up to another. The second woman, the starving mother, agrees to give the baby up: she is ready to abandon the child and never to see her/him again.

King Solomon chooses the starving mother rather than the overfeeding mother. This choice is also common in contemporary capitalistic culture, and in the recreational and educational systems that mediate it: it is better to relinquish and to abandon (at least to a certain extent) than give too much love.

But the film *Mama* creates a turning point in this hierarchical plot. Two mothers struggle for the young girls and there is no male to determine who is more deserving: the men in this plot either disappear or are weak. In the absence of patriarchal mediation the women must find their own solution. The final struggle for custody takes place on the cliff overlooking the lake into which Edith jumped many years before. The two women demand the two children for themselves, but they gradually give up. Each of them holds on to one child and the sisters are divided—each belongs to a different mother.

The act of dividing the two girls hints that the decision of the wise king is not the only possible just verdict. The struggle for the two girls ends in the symbolic division of the baby in two. Lilly, the younger sister, is handed over to Mama, who envelops her as they both dive into the lake. Their death is described with romantic nuances of a return to semiotic order (Kristeva 101), of primal love, without limits, language or law: Lilly smiles with happiness at Mama, and Mama looks at her with a human face, no longer monstrous, with motherly satisfaction as they unite in the lake-womb. The older girl Victoria remains with Annabel, who hugs her tightly with warmth; she will function as part of a normative nuclear family unit, under the protection of a mother who was not interested in her from the beginning, but has learned to accept her. In the isolated cabin in the forest, an uncultured space, the two sisters, who were symbolically one childlike body, have been divided into two. The mothers who were responsible for this violent deed have now been judged innocent in the consciousness of the viewers, while the evil that has clung to their characters diminishes. Consequently this scene is accepted as a happy and just end to the film.

Conclusion: The Human Face of the Bad Mother

The film *Mama* undermines the patriarchal cultural conventions that create a rigid hierarchy between two types of bad mothers, "the overfeeding mother" and "the starving mother." It seemingly obeys the accepted perception in that

it signifies the most dangerous mother of all—the overfeeding mother—as a threatening archaic ghost. But despite the horror she arouses, the film does not negate the legitimacy of her existence. The audience gradually befriends Mama, understanding her motivations, seeing her human face and identifying with her maternal attachment to Lilly.

In contrast to most horror movies that deal with motherhood, the scene of the determination of the struggle deviates from the rules of the genre and is shaped into a touching family melodrama. The viewers adapt to the radical solution of dividing the symbolic child, as they discover that the two mothers have learned from one another; they have become more pragmatic. Annabel has become a mother who worries about the young girls after experiencing the threatening presence of Mama. On the other hand, Mama has learned the attributes of renunciation and adaptation: She understands that the desire of Victoria, the older sister, to stay with Annabel is legitimate and that she must accept it. Has the "starver" learned to nourish; has the "over-feeder" learned to desist? This ending—the concealed dialogue between the two mothers and their ultimate agreement—grants a melodramatic tone to the plot and to its radical verdict. It also enables the audience to experience the cruel separation of the two sisters as a "happy end."

Thus, what is frightening in the film and what explains its phenomenal success, is the fact that it deviates from familiar patterns: It does not judge the two bad mothers or punish them, but rather refers sympathetically to their motivations, and even undercuts the cultural hierarchy between the overfeeding mother and the starving mother. Confronting the rigid structure of the limits of the impossible "good mother" and presenting the mother who deviates from these limits as fundamentally monstrous, it presents non-normative patterns of representation of bad mothers and grants them the chance to change, which stems from the dialogue between them. This undermines the horror that they arouse by exposing their human sides and the lack of constancy in their positions. It hints that the ghostly traces of the bad mother are not necessarily horrifying after all; and exactly because of that—in Western culture that so strictly maintains the myth of the good mother and the enormous fear of the bad mother—the film is so frightening.

In this sense, the movie functions as a popular text that undermines the common representations of bad mothers, which appears—explicitly or implicitly—in various arenas of popular culture. These representations map the bad mother as either overfeeding or starving, and grant the latter with cultural priority as the "the least of all evils." *Mama*'s commercial success testifies to a cultural thirst to violate those binary representations or to rephrase them. Contrary to King Solomon's resultant verdict, the film describes the battle between those patterns of bad mothers in a more complex and indecisive

manner. Thus, it offers an option for essential dialogue between contrasting day-to-day motherly experiences, haunted by guilt and fear, which is only rarely presented in contemporary culture.

[1]*Mama*, IMBd <http://www.imd b.com/title/tt2023587/?ref =nv_sr_1>, accessed Sept., 2014.
[2]See *Kings* 3:24-28, *King James Bible*.
[3]As is well known, the cultural image of instinctual mother love has existed in Western culture only since the eighteenth century (Stone 55-65; Gillis 152-166; Hufton 173-217; Silva 10-15; Forna 30-31; Hager 38-39). Until the eighteenth century, women did not necessarily raise their children and were not even demanded to love them (Forna 25-34; Badinter 63). Following social and economic processes, most importantly the acceleration of the industrial revolution, conditions created the need to find a cultural agent to care for the children, leading to the creation of the role of the mother, as it is known to us (Forna 36; Rich 7-52). In the present, women are still obliged to raise their children and to be responsible for their education and their happiness, as women's sense of social, ethical and psychological welfare depends on fulfilling this mission.
[4]The biblical term in Hebrew that describes the women's status, is "Zonot," which refers to women who have engaged in sexual conduct out of wedlock; The common Jewish interpretation (the Halacha) asserts that they were not prostitutes.

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"Calling Bullshit on the Whole Thing"

Women, Health, Agency and Maternity in the Popular Film, *What to Expect When You're Expecting*

Popular culture is a significant site of discourse on maternity, in the maintenance of hegemonic ideologies and practices relating to maternity, and in the silencing of alternatives to commonly accepted norms of maternity. This essay examines the social and political issues of pregnancy and birth as presented in What to Expect When You're Expecting *(Jones) and engages in a critical feminist analysis of the film in terms of maternity and the Women's Health Movement (WHM). Gender-based oppression, authoritative medicine, and individualized and essentialized reproduction are discussed as they appear in the film and in women's health discourse. This essay argues that the film supports dominant ideologies of maternity and even manipulates the terms of feminist health care to create the appearance of support for more alternative or even oppositional representations; thus, allowing the film to limit the progress of the WHM while simultaneously appearing to support it. As the WHM aims to reclaim women's subjectivity, their agency, and their epistemic power, cultural studies can be employed to foster oppositional decodings of the film, encouraging viewers to question the content of the film and its support of hegemonic values.*

Texts espousing ideologies of pregnancy and childbirth are widely available in contemporary Western popular culture, spanning all mediums, including self-help books (offering varying degrees of advice from medical recommendations to anecdotal narratives). Between all of the instructions, warnings, suggestions, and ideologies about 'morality', 'normality', 'risk', 'safety', and 'acceptability', members of society in general, and women in particular, are deeply entrenched in social and cultural discourses of this phase of reproduction.

The self-proclaimed "#1 bestselling pregnancy book" *What to Expect When You're Expecting* (Murkoff & Mazel), is "the pregnancy guide that reassuringly

answers the questions of mothers and fathers-to-be" (front cover). "America's Pregnancy Bible" (Murkoff & Mazel back cover) was loosely adapted to a popular feature film of the same name, directed by Jones, in 2012. *What to Expect When You're Expecting* (Jones) follows five women and their partners through their stories from conception to birth. The film inevitably creates an array of representations of pregnancy and birth, and in doing so, speaks to political, social, and cultural discourses on reproduction and maternity. These representations are significant in their ability to convey meanings to viewers in terms of norms and culturally acceptable behaviours, and not only that, but the films connection to a widely popular self-help reference book of the same name may also impact viewers' consumption and interpretations of the text.

This essay analyzes the film *What to Expect When You're Expecting* (Jones) from a cultural studies standpoint, utilizing a feminist perspective to consider issues surrounding pregnancy, birth, and this early stage motherhood as they connect to issues of women's agency and health in reproduction. The essay begins with discussion of the texts, background on medicalization, the women's health movement, and culture, and analysis of the specific representations found in the film. In light of that discussion and analysis, the essay argues that through representations of reproduction, *What to Expect* (Jones) attempts to appear to advance a feminist health agenda, while actually limiting its progress, which is potentially furthered still by the film's connection to its reference book predecessor. Finally, the essay employs cultural studies to then consider how alternative viewings of the film may actually support possibilities for change in maternity discourse going forward as well as in individual women's choices.

The Texts

What to Expect, The Book

The first edition of the book dates back to 1984 with new editions and re-prints in 1988, 1991, 1996, 2002, and the most recent fourth edition in 2008. *What to Expect When You're Expecting*, is now just one book in the *What to Expect* Series, which includes *What to Expect: The First Year* (2008)—addressing life as a mother and parent to an infant from birth to twelve months, *What to Expect: The Second Year* (2011), *What to Expect Before You're Expecting* (2009), *What to Expect: Eating Well When You're Expecting* (2005), and even the *What to Expect Pregnancy Journal and Organizer* (2007), among others. *What to Expect When You're Expecting* has 18 million copies in print and has been published in over thirty languages ("About Heidi"). The entire *What to Expect* series is credited with over thirty-four million copies sold in the United States alone (ibid). In 2005 *What to Expect* expanded to create their online presence which includes

pregnancy and parenting information and news and a worldwide community of over 13 million moms (ibid). Murkoff also created the What To Expect Foundation, a non-profit committed to helping underserved families to have health pregnancies, births, and babies in the United States, which has also been extended to Liberia and Bangladesh (ibid). In 2011, Heidi Murkoff was listed on *Time* Magazine's list of the top 100 most influential people ("Heidi Murkoff").

The long-time *What to Expect* author, Heidi Murkoff, states she came up with the idea for the first book "during her first pregnancy, when she couldn't find answers to her questions or reassurance for her worries in the books she turned to for much-needed advice" and that she felt determined to write something that would help parents "sleep better at night" ("About Heidi"). Murkoff and Mazel's book describes itself as "reassuringly" (front cover) answering questions and as providing "comforting answers to hundreds of questions" (back cover). In his foreword to the book, physician Charles Lockwood describes it as, "like having a personal obstetrician to guide [the reader]" (Murkoff & Mazel xx). The book then, seems to assume that parents will have many questions arise during a pregnancy (and based on the other books in the series, both before and after a pregnancy as well), and that this book meets that need in lieu of other sources such as maternity care providers, academic and health research, family, and friends.

What to Expect, The Film

The film was released in theatres in North America in May 2012, on DVD in September (What to Expect When You're Expecting: Official Movie Site), and is also currently available on the online streaming service Netflix. Although the film is no longer in theatres, it is still widely available to purchase on DVD and view online with a membership. One of the book's authors, Heidi Murkoff, served as Executive Producer of the *What to Expect* film. The film is described in its trailer as "inspired by the best-selling book" ("Videos: Trailer"). The website connected to the book describes the film as "a comedy that features five intertwining couples whose lives are turned upside-down by the challenges of impending parenthood" ("About Heidi"). The book can even be seen very briefly being read by one of the characters during a scene in the film. The film's trailer states, "we're due for a brutally honest, confusing, embarrassing, revealing look at what to expect when you're expecting" ("Videos: Trailer"). The book is organized by topics and months of pregnancy. Within these sections the authors incorporate questions submitted by individuals to frame and direct the discussion. The use of interconnected narratives in the film creates a similar tone of following the very individual questions and experiences that arise to recognize and plot each person and couple's unique reproductive experience. The film

also ties in brief pregnancy and birth advice sound bites into the dialogue that is reminiscent of information discussed in the book (such as representing the benefits of breastfeeding in dialogue, and discussing some possible efforts to increase the likelihood of conceiving). Although there are obvious similarities in structure and tone, as well as similar information between the film and book, a shared name, and the presence of the book's author on the film's production, the film is simply inspired by the book. The film does not represent itself as a reference material (although arguably does include some), and the book does not represent itself as a comedic fictional narrative (although it does contain some narrative elements and is written with humour).

Based on the notion that individuals will be likely to watch a film if it engages with topics and ideas that are relevant to them, and with characters that they can relate to, the film is likely aimed at middle class, middle-aged adults and young adults who are engaged with pregnancy, birth, and reproduction in their lives. The film could be described as a romantic-comedy, typically targeting women and couples as their primary audience.

Medicalized Women, The Women's Health Movement, and Culture

Morgan describes medicalization as involving five central tenets. The first three tenets are summarized as, "the creation and transmission of medical authoritative knowledge through mediating macro-structures and practices within which micro-institutionalization doctor-patient relations are constituted through direct or mediated personal encounters" (95). The fourth tenet is micro-institutionalization through self-management of individual members who internalize, use, support, and even demand medicalization, referred to as "medicalized subjectivity or medicalized agency" (Morgan 96). The final tenet includes medicalization as a form of social control in its claim for jurisdiction in the ordinary lifeworlds of individuals (ibid 97). Successful medicalization then incorporates action at individual, interpersonal, public, private, and structural levels that results in an image of medicine in general and doctors in particular as the benevolent source of expert authoritative medical knowledge. In medicalization, women are viewed both by others and by themselves as rightly underneath the medical gaze. Women find themselves under surveillance not only by doctors, but in public and private as well, "when medicalized norms of the "responsible pregnancy" are used judgementally to evaluate and criticize the behaviour of pregnant women" (ibid 95).

Rothman discusses the use of technology and its impact on motherhood. She explains that technology is not just a neutral tool, "as soon as one concedes that technology is for something, then it is no longer neutral" (48). The technology of reproduction then can be considered as it appears in *What to*

Expect: the examining table, the stirrups, the operating room, the epidural, the cell phone fertility calendar. Ideologically, a technological society is described as, "a way of thinking about the world in mechanical, industrial terms" (ibid 49). Rothman explains that in a technological society, there are consistent themes of "a connotation of order, productivity, rationality, and control" (ibid 52), and "when a doctor manages a woman's labour, controlling her body with drugs and even surgery, it is to make her labor more efficient, predictable, rational" (53).

Brubaker and Dillaway discuss the feminist perspectives on the medicalization of childbirth, focusing on issues of control (whether birth is controlled by women or physicians), setting (with a medical setting significantly shifting control towards physicians), and the use of medical technology (53-55). On medical technology they state that, "According to feminist literature, medical technology usurps the birthing process once birth is moved to the hospital because there is a tendency to trust the accomplishments of this technology over the accomplishments of women and their bodies when this technology is readily available" (55). They summarize that, "the feminist critique of the medicalization of childbirth emphasizes the expansion of medical jurisdiction and control over women's natural domain of childbirth through the use of the hospital setting and medical technology" (55).

There are women (and other individuals) who contest the knowledge and politics of medicalization and stand up for women, the female body and its medicalization. The Women's Health Movement is a diverse and long-lived effort to stand-up for the health and bodies of women. For the purpose of this paper, the consideration of the women's health movement is broad and inclusive. In its efforts to contest the knowledge and politics of medicalization, the women's health movement then has two tasks: first, (re) claiming women's subjectivity and agency; and second, (re)claiming epistemic power (Morgan 109). Towards the goal of reclaiming subjectivity and agency Morgan describes significant acts such as resisting the role of "ideal patient" (compliant, cooperative, with a strong belief in paternal medical authority) (ibid); the political act of sharing personal stories, not just of healing but also of oppression, pain, and medical exploitation and coercion (ibid); and fighting for the recognition of women as formal and informal healers, health care providers, and critical advocates (ibid 110-111). Reclaiming epistemic power involves the demystification and democratization of medical knowledge (such as through various self-help and women's groups) (ibid 113); and the reclaiming of lost knowledge of women healers as well as women's knowledge gained through lived experiences (ibid 113-4).

In, "A Fertile Grounding: Cultural Studies Meets Women's Health," Warren explains that "the complex, interlocking relationships between texts and bodies,

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between popular culture and medical practice, between disease and health have proliferated and become increasingly intertwined in the last quarter century" (178). As a popular culture text, *What to Expect* isn't necessarily just for entertainment; with Warren's observation in mind, the film is also connected to ideas surrounding medical practice, mother's bodies, and their health. Both feminism and cultural studies lend themselves to this examination in that they can each be described as "both an intellectual and political tradition where practitioners see themselves as implicitly and explicitly political," giving voice to the voiceless (Warren 179). In her consideration of medicalization, Warren explains that "this model's epistemological and material power comes from the ways it circulates both outside and inside the clinic, its ability to define not only what we consider as "scientific fact," but also to control the reins of culture (180). Warren raises concern over the tendency for the macro and micro-institutions to spread through culture and take over, stating that these institutions "have taken the terms of feminist healthcare and happily incorporated them into the capitalist system" (181).

Representations, Agency, and (Un)Progress

The Irrational, Out of Control Woman

Throughout the film viewers witness many portrayals of pregnant women as out of control, irrational, and at the whims of their bodies. From loss of bodily control (involuntarily passing gas and urinating), to heightened sexual arousal, to violent rage, to all range of emotional outbursts attributed to what one character calls, "hoooormooooones," women who are otherwise portrayed as competent, collected, and in control are portrayed as uncontrollable and irrational in pregnancy. In birth, we witness more of the same, during which issues the women had earlier held strong and thought-out positions on (such as circumcision and the use of medications during labour), are very suddenly abandoned with melodramatic comedic flair, such as when one character who previously felt strongly against circumcising her son yells, as she's rolled through the hospital in a wheelchair, "I don't care about his penis, who gives a shit!" The film suggests that having a child results in women going 'crazy' in one way or another.

Morgan discusses the connections that have existed between hormones, the body, and mental instability or disease when it comes to women (102). The portrayal of women as irrational and out of control as a result of their womanhood and bodily existence is a long-used tactic of reducing women's agency and minimizing their issues and concerns. This context is no different than the reduction of women's political activities or beliefs to simply 'that time of the month', or similar gender-based oppression.

Authoritative Medicine and Technology

What to Expect fits very neatly into the medicalized ideology of pregnancy and birth as discussed above. During one scene in the film, viewers join two characters exiting a doctor's office, after a routine appointment. The mother-to-be tells her doctor that she, "loves research, it soothes [her]." The doctor tells her that "[she] will love 'the wall'." 'The wall' is covered in brochures on various topics including breastfeeding, circumcision, cord blood banking, and other pregnancy and infant-related topics. The character's love of research and 'the wall' may appear on one hand as evidence of increased agency in her healthcare. However simultaneously, it appears that she is not participating in a partnership with her doctor, but is placated with the limited information available in these pamphlets. Although it is possible that the research made available on the wall may act as a springboard for the mother to engage in further research and discussion with her physician, the film does not even attempt to portray or display that possibility, leaving it to a viewer make that jump. Further, the mother's "love" of research, in the context of an authoritarian doctor/patient relationship, points to a need for outside validation that is not in line with the revaluing of women's own bodily knowledge and lived experiences discussed above as a key element of the women's health movement. Warren states that, "as informed, thinking people, women should be partners in decisions about their health, part of a doctor-patient coalition, rather than passive recipients of medical expertise" (181). *What to Expect* does not incorporate this view of women's agency in health care, nor does it even address this alternative to obedience to medical authority that continues to be predominant throughout the film.

After a dramatic fall, one character is put on bed rest for the remainder of her pregnancy "to control contractions." The character attempts to discuss the situation with her doctor, advocating for herself and her desire to get out of bed stating, "I can do this," to which the doctor replies "no you can't … honestly, you don't have a choice. Now, who can you call to take care of you?" Although with the limitations of the film (as in lived realities) we cannot know if the bed rest the character is put on is necessary or not, however, we do observe the complete absence of partnership or collaboration between woman and care provider. The viewer observes an authoritarian expert who simply expects obedience, and a woman who reluctantly complies with a sigh. The doctor tears down any sense of agency the woman has in harshly denying her choice and condescendingly asking who will take care of her.

In the film, all of the births occur in a hospital accompanied by the typical technological equipment (IVs, monitors). All of the women are under the care of physicians (as opposed to alternative care providers such as midwives). All obey the instructions and direction of their doctors. All deliver in the stereotypical

supine position, reclined on a bed with legs held up. In the vaginal births, the women all obey the pushing instructions of the medical staff. There is no sense or mention of women as having agency or having any knowledge to contribute to the birth scenes; all direction is taken from the medical staff. In one of the births (which up to this point seems to be proceeding without issue), a doctor walks into the room containing a mother in labour (where there appears to be no sense of urgency or emergency) and calmly states, "We need to prep for a caesarean section." The mother replies "I wanna push, I have a birth plan." The doctor responds, "I'm sorry, we have to" and leaves. Again, the necessity of the medical procedure is unclear; however, the exchange occurs with a complete absence of partnership, respect, discussion, or female agency; there is only authority and obedience. Much like the viewer, the character seems to be expected to take the doctor's order at face value and obey.

Technology in pregnancy and birth is abundant throughout the film, with its use being completely unquestioned by the characters and actively embraced in some instances, demonstrating Martin's fourth tenet of medicalization discussed above, which includes women's internalization, use, support, and demand for medicalization. Martin states that technology "diverts our attention from the social relationships of power and domination that are involved" (57). Martin uses metaphors to describe the relationship of women and physicians. A woman's body, according to Martin, can be viewed as a machine, and the doctor as the technician who 'fixes' it (54). In another analogy, a doctor is considered as the supervisor of a factory, with the female patient as labourer and the baby as the product (Martin 57). In both of these metaphors, those involved are focused on maximizing the 'machine's' efficiency to achieve optimum output (getting baby out according to a predetermined timetable with set parameters). In these models and in birth, deviance from statistical norms leads to concerns over efficient versus inefficient work and then to diagnosis of dysfunction. The film provides examples of what might be considered 'routine maintenance' in regularly scheduled appointments, and of observing parameters in births wherein women and infants are expected to display the appropriate heart rates and dilation to establish the sufficient/insufficient progress of labour. The inclusion of these ideologies and practices in the representations of birth supports the normalization of same in the lived realities of viewers and problematically may preclude the questioning of same in lived experiences.

Men and Relationships

What to Expect perpetuates gendered stereotypes and norms through its narratives. Throughout the film viewers witness women who are actively interested in reproduction, with men being disinterested or at the very least, less interested. Reproduction is framed as solely an issue for women with women

initiating and maintaining parenthood (for example, deciding on terminating an unplanned pregnancy or not, trying to become pregnant or not, pursuing adoption or not). To become more comfortable with the idea and realities of fatherhood, one of the men in the film is sent to a "dude's group" to spend time with other fathers caring for their children without their partners. The 'dude's group' is described by the men as an opportunity to 'blow off a little steam'. One rule of the group is "no judgement," including in reaction to in-stances of fathers dropping their children and discovering (after the fact) that their children have eaten garbage The new member is instructed "not to talk [outside their group] about what [they] talk about [in the group]," furthering gendered ideas about men needing a space to escape the controlling gaze of women in their lives (while there is no 'women's group' for females). This is reconfirmed later when he does in fact share information discussed in the group with his wife (which she then shares with the partner of the confiding man), and the father-to-be is temporarily banned from the group when his indiscretion becomes known.

Men are simultaneously portrayed as caretakers of women in their 'weakened' (pregnant) state. At a doctor's appointment, one doctor describes to a woman the good health she is in, then directs at her partner "and dad is gonna keep you that way, riiiight?" as if the woman was incapable of keeping her*self* in good health. Later on in the film, when a character is put on bed rest and the father rushes to her side, he states, "I don't want anyone else taking care of you. That's my job." The absence of single or homosexual women in the film contributes to this representation via the absence of any alternative to women 'needing' care-taking by men.

Men's perceptions of women's bodies is considered when one father describes his changed perception of women's anatomy, explaining that although he had not generally used the term 'vagina' prior to becoming a father, "after a baby has come out of it, it's a vagina." The film doesn't delve deeper into the topic, however, it arguably makes suggestions about the perceived changes in women's sexuality after they become mothers. The tone of the discussion in the film and the light women's bodies and sexualities are portrayed in is arguably not positive.

Individualized and Essentialized Reproduction

After agency (considered above), Warren points out that another theme in the sphere of politics and health is, "how health care ignores social structure and instead looks to the individual" (187). Despite the potential to consider larger scale structural topics in light of the five narratives being considered, the film individualizes the women's stories and generally essentializes pregnancy and birth. The individualization in the film depoliticizes issues which otherwise could be considered in a political framework (such a mother-care provider

relations and gender roles).

Pregnant women are pitted against each other in jealousy-fueled comparisons of issues, health, and physical appearance in pregnancy. Instances of surveillance are presented as comical situations, never critically considered. One woman who appears active, very happy, and comfortable is described by another as "a magical pregnancy unicorn." One character explains that in pregnancy she just wanted "the glow" like women in maternity magazines have. As she breaks down describing her discomfort and inability to find "the glow," she proclaims that she is "calling bullshit on the whole thing." Although this statement might be considered in a structural way, (decrying the norms of what pregnancy and birth 'should' look like) in the film it is not. There is no mention of oppression, no consideration of how "the glow" has come to be perpetuated despite the difficulty in achieving it according to the character. The opportunity to turn a critical eye on the inability to achieve the glow is disregarded and the character goes on to describe only her own individual discomfort in her body and loss of bodily and emotional control, seemingly to even embrace the irrational and out of control stereotype discussed above. The next day women flock to the character's baby store to buy her products (not to voice their own protests to traditional ideologies of maternity).

Making and Limiting Progress

The narratives each conclude with happy endings. A couple who experienced a miscarriage earlier in the film and subsequently ended their relationship get back together under the pretense that they'll have another chance to reproduce when the time is right; a couple who experienced a traumatic caesarean section appear to be completely unaffected by their traumatic experience: after the fact the father states that it was "the scariest night of [his] life," to which the mother responds, "no, it was beautiful," which he follows with, "yeah, that's what I meant." Even the potential for negative emotional, physical, or psychological impacts is entirely dismissed in this moment, let alone any consideration for the oppressive medical treatment they experience prior to the birth. The happy ending in the film exists at the cost of silencing all of these potential issues that real individuals might experience in similar circumstances. The film's conclusion seems to minimize the potential for oppression or negativity of any kind because "everything turns out alright in the end."

There are significant absences in terms of the range of lived realities presented in the film. The issue of race is all but nullified as almost all of the couples in the film appear to be visibly white (barring the mild accent of one character). Chris Rock is cast as an African American father in the film, however his

presence seems to be one of largely comedic value (as a member of the dude's group) than to diversify the content; he is not amongst the five couples whose narrative we follow. Although his presence and embrace of fatherhood are positive representations of African-American fatherhood, the representation is disappointingly very minimal and superficial in terms content and screen time. Further, all of the couples are just that: heterosexual couples; there are no single parents, homosexual parents, or parents who are not in a romantic relationship of some kind (either a committed or married couple). Although in contemporary popular culture alternative birth practices, locations, and care providers (including intervention-free or 'natural' births, births out of hospital, and midwives) are becoming more popular and more integrated in the discourse on birth (even in other popular culture films depicting pregnancy and birth such as *Baby Mama* (McCullers) and *The Back-Up Plan* (Poul), all births in this film are in hospital with a physician.

There is no mention of class, or poverty presented (beyond the stereotypical worry about buying a first house and saving for college funds). Warren describes that biomedicine "is more than happy to frame the woman patient as an ideal consumer of healthcare as long as she isn't poor, or a minority, or worst of all, uninsured" (181); her comment loudly rings true in *What to Expect.* Although the multiple narrative structure of the film may suggest an attempt to represent diversity, the end result is simply multiple representations of dominant ideologies that support maintenance of the status quo.

The film, based on a handful of connected narratives, does women and society disservice by depicting an incredibly limited view of reproduction and its associated topics under the banner of the popular self-help book that arguably at least attempts to cover a broader range of topics and address a larger portion of the population of reproductive women (with sections including some consideration of alternative providers and locations) (Murkoff & Mazel).

Horkheimer and Adorno, in "The Culture Industry as Mass Deception," consider the interchangeability of details in mass cultural products as "ready-made clichés to be slotted in anywhere; they never do anything more than fulfill the purpose allotted them in the overall plan" (1244). *What to Expect* seems to be largely built on various clichés that do nothing to reach outside of stereotype (such as the young couple who gets pregnant; the nervous and unsure father; the woman obsessed with babies who finally conceives her own; the career-woman who gets pregnant and negotiates her changing body and professional life). As mentioned above, Warren considers the incorporation of feminist positions into the medicalized model of reproduction and culture in general. In *What to Expect* we witness limited alternatives to traditional maternity ideologies crafted into the film (such as the wall, which appears to support knowledgeable parents, but which may limit care-giver/mother

discussion and breed compliance and obedience), allowing positions to exist but also to remain largely ignored within the "overall plan."

"Cultural studies scholar Stuart Hall considers three methods through which consumers may decode a text; the first is the dominant-hegemonic position that utilizes the dominant code to read the message that was intended ("Encoding, Decoding" 515). For example, a dominant decoding of *What to Expect* might be that birth is risky and dangerous and women should submit to the authority of expert medicine that is supporting what is 'best' for them. The second position is a negotiated decoding that operates with a mixture of adaptive and oppositional components, accepting hegemonic definitions on a theoretical scale but also operating with "exceptions to the rule" on practical levels (ibid 516). A negotiated decoding of the film might include acceptance of the authority of doctors but also interpretations of particular circumstances that defy that acceptance (perhaps accepting the authority of doctors, but also criticism of a physician's unkind dismissal of a patient's concern in a specific instance). The third possibility is an oppositional decoding in which the viewer deconstructs the message through the dominant coding and then reconstructs it according to an alternative framework (ibid 517). An oppositional decoding of the film might include recognizing the oppression of the women in the birth scenes, protest towards this single, disempowered representation of childbirth, and recognition of a need for the representations of alternatives.

In "The Need for Cultural Studies," Giroux, Shumway, Smith, and Sosnoski argue, "that there is a need for cultural studies to engage critically" with substantial social and political issues "and to promote an understanding of both the enabling and constraining dimensions of culture" (introduction). The authors go on to describe a need to "become involved in the political reading of popular culture" (Giroux et al., Section II: Public Spheres, Popular Culture, and Cultural Studies). In the case of *What to Expect When You're Expecting*, it seems clear that a more critical viewing is needed to consider how the film relates to the social and political issues of maternity which it dabbles in.

A significant element in the case of *What to Expect When You're Expecting* (Jones) is the adaptation of a self-help pregnancy reference book to a popular feature film. In the film attention is even drawn to the book, as it's briefly featured with one of the characters reading it in a scene. The shift from a reference book containing advice for medical treatments and health practices as well as commonly asked questions, to a film with the introduction of narratives carries significant implications. Firstly, the amount of material that can be included in the film compared to the book is significantly reduced; this also likely contributes to the essentializing of the reproductive experience as discussed above. Of most concern is the potential for the content of the film

popular culture texts such as the film *What to Expect*, women's health advocates are tasked with finding ways to support oppositional decodings of such texts. These efforts will involve bringing more pieces of the puzzle together (that is recognizing individual differences and de-essentializing maternity); only then will real women have the pieces necessary for their individual decoding.

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MARIA COLLIER DE MENDONÇA

Elastic Mothers at a Crossroad

A Qualitative and Semiotic Analysis of Motherhood in Advertising in Toronto and São Paulo

This paper presents the key findings of my doctoral research, which argued that advertising reproduces and reinforces culturally constructed maternal ideals. To do so, I investigated three research issues: first, what meanings are associated with being a mother today; second, what maternal ideals are predominant within advertising messages and imagery; and third, how mothers and pregnant women negotiate these advertising signs. My theoretical-methodological framework includes semiotic and psychoanalytic concepts and qualitative research with mothers and pregnant women. The Canadian research corpus includes advertisements, published from 2010 to 2013 in Parents Canada, Canadian Family and Today's Parent magazines. The Brazilian research corpus includes advertisements, published from 2006 to 2013, in Pais e Filhos and Crescer magazines. I interviewed pregnant women and mothers with children up to eight years of age in Toronto and in São Paulo, to explore how they perceive themselves as mothers and what they think about these advertisements. The advertising analysis aims at identifying thematic groups of advertisements with similar characteristics (maternal representations, images, messages, sales appeals and cultural ideals). I begin this paper by highlighting contextual similarities and differences related to being a mother today in São Paulo and in Toronto. Next, I present key findings obtained from the semiotic analysis of Brazilian and Canadian advertising. To do so, I introduce main ideas from different scholars, which inspired my work. Then, I summarize the thematic groups of advertisements mapped in Brazil, followed by a more detailed analysis of the Canadian advertising. Finally, I conclude by summing up the most important findings obtained in Canada, in contrast to Brazil.

Over the last ten years, motherhood and mothering have deeply changed my life. In October 2003, I found out I was pregnant and started reading Brazilian

parenting magazines. By that time, I felt really disturbed how advertising was portraying and speaking to mothers. My initial impression was that advertisers were portraying pregnant women as passive and inexperienced in motherhood; and mothers as calm, sweet and totally dedicated to their children. However, all mothers whom I knew were living at a very fast pace and taking on a wide range of responsibilities. This insight motivated my master's and doctoral research developments that led to this paper.

In this paper, I argue that advertising reproduces and reinforces culturally constructed maternal ideals. My central argument will be supported on qualitative research results, motherhood scholars' ideas (O'Reilly; Hays; Douglas and Michaels) and also on Brazilian psychoanalyst Maria Helena Fernandes statement that women are currently confronting a broader-than-ever range of ideals which we are supposed to reach. Inspired by the metaphorical image of mothers, from São Paulo and Toronto, living like "Elastic Mothers at a Crossroad," I will start presenting specific learning from both cities and their qualitative fieldwork. After, I will present thematic groups of advertisements mapped in Brazil and Canada, combining semiotics and psychoanalytic theory and showing a variety of strategies used by them to reinforce and reproduce the dominant culture of motherhood. Finally, I will conclude by comparing the most important findings obtained in Canada, in contrast to Brazil.

Being a Mother Today: Contextual Similarities in São Paulo and in Toronto

Demographic data obtained from the governmental agencies Statistics Canada and the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) help us to understand the key similarities between motherhood in Brazil and Canada:

a) Canadian and Brazilian women currently represent more than 40 percent of the workforce in their countries.
b) In both countries, the current fertility rate is below 1.8 children per woman (1.61 in Canada and 1.74 in Brazil).
c) The households depicted as the mythical advertising family—a heterosexual married couple with biological children, where the man is the breadwinner and the mother is responsible for taking care of the kids and the home—no longer represent the dominant family configuration. In fact, the last census surveys that were conducted in Brazil and in Canada have detected diversity of family configurations in both countries, which together represent more than 50 percent of the households which currently exist. Statistics Canada (2012) defines a "census family" like so:

> Refers to a married couple (with or without children of either and/or both spouses), a common-law couple (with or without children of either and/or both partners) or a lone parent of any marital status, with at least one child. A couple may be of opposite sex or same sex. A couple family with children may be further classified as either an intact family in which all children are the biological and/or adopted children of both married spouses or of both common-law partners or a stepfamily with at least one biological or adopted child of only one married spouse or common-law partner and whose birth or adoption preceded the current relationship.

In the terms of the Dutch sociologist, Saskia Sassen (1991, 2005), Toronto and São Paulo are both global cities. These metropolis economies are based on business activities related to specialized services, which serve a large international network of connected global corporations. In this sense, I observed many multinational companies, operating in several industries, sell the same range of products and brands in Canada and in Brazil. Moreover, in Toronto and in São Paulo, mothers also have media habits in common: they watch the same Hollywood movies and television sitcoms, they read parenting magazines and mommy blogs, and they interact with friends through social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter and so on.

In my doctoral research, I conducted qualitative research in both cities I was studying. During this fieldwork, I interviewed 48 women matching one of three profiles—pregnant women, mothers of babies (up to twelve months) and mothers of children up to eight years of age—24 in São Paulo and 24 in Toronto. During this phase, the following key similarities were found in both cities:

a) Motherhood triggered deep changes in the interviewees' everyday lives, and motivated changes in individual values, plans and priorities. According to interviewees, being a mother is an experience that implies new responsibilities, so it makes women become stronger and more mature.

b) Pregnancy was considered a controversial phase: despite being a happy and special time, it also provokes anxiety due to the fast and progressive maternal body transformations.

c) In the first year of motherhood, mothers and babies build a strong physical and emotional bond. On one hand, interviewees reported feeling proud and powerful while nourishing and caring for their babies, as well as touched by their babies' daily progress. On the other, they reported feeling physically exhausted and emotionally stressed, due to the intensity of effort required for adaptation to their new daily routines.

d) The mothers of children up to eight years of age reported the processes

of socialization, growth and progressive autonomy of their children. In this phase, mothers reported being concerned with their children's nutrition, health and education. To these ends, they try to stimulate their children's creativity and sense of imagination.

e) In both cities surveyed, women reported facing difficulties to resume their professional activities. Both Canadian and Brazilian mothers reported a constant struggle to reconcile different roles and duties, and difficulties in balancing the time dedicated to their children, their spouses, household chores, work and themselves. Consequently, in São Paulo and in Toronto, many interviewees reported having changed their work schemes: since their children were born, some mothers decided to quit their jobs and others have been working part-time or freelancing from home.

f) The desire to be seen by others as "good mothers" increases feelings of guilt among interviewees. In both cities, mothers reported worrying about failing by doing anything "wrong" for their children. Thus, ideals of maternal perfection deeply affect their feelings, actions and thoughts. Nevertheless, some women talk back and others just follow cultural and media pressures.

Being a Mother Today: Contextual Differences and Specific Aspects in São Paulo and in Toronto

Although Brazilian and Canadian interviewees both feel strong media and social pressures on how they mother their children, these pressures were discussed with greater intensity in Toronto than in São Paulo, within the three target segments studied (pregnant women, mothers of babies and mothers of children up to eight years). In São Paulo, mothers were more concerned with urban violence and other tensions in the public environment. However, in Toronto, maternal worries related to juggling household chores, child care, work, and other activities were more intense. In fact, middle-class women from São Paulo can count on a support network formed by relatives or domestic servants, while in Toronto, the women, despite belonging to the same social class, need to care for their homes and children by themselves. As a result, they reported feeling overwhelmed and dealing with more difficulties. In my interpretation, due to their hard mothering work and domestic routine, Torontonian interviewees reacted in a more critical way than respondents in São Paulo when evaluating advertising.

Key Findings Obtained from the Semiotic Analysis of Advertising

The findings obtained in both countries during the stages of qualitative research and semiotic analysis of advertising clarified different types of strategies used

by advertisers to reinforce and reproduce the culturally-dominant motherhood ideals. In general, many claims, messages and advertising images convey promises of success, completeness, safety, efficiency, flexibility and better performance for mothers, but—above all—they reaffirm that mothering work is a female responsibility.

Feminist North American scholars of motherhood (Hays; Douglas and Michaels; O'Reilly, among others) point out that maternal ideals are constructed according to the sociocultural, historical and economical contexts with which they interact. Andrea O'Reilly argues that patriarchal motherhood is informed and sustained by ten ideological assumptions that cause mothering to be oppressive to women. She terms them as follows:

> …essentialization, privatization, individualization, naturalization, normalization, idealization, bioligicalization, expertization, intensification, and depoliticalization of motherhood.… All ten of the aforementioned assumptions or mandates of patriarchal motherhood work, separately and in unison, to structure and sustain motherhood as a patriarchal institution that causes mothering to be disempowering, if not oppressive, to mothers. (187)

According to O'Reilly these ten ideological assumptions generate the societal devaluation of motherwork and also reinforce the impossible standards of idealized motherhood. Consequently, mothers feel overwhelmed, exhausted and guilty due to the hard work and responsibility which they take on by mothering alone. However, O'Reilly remembers and emphasizes that these ten ideological assumptions are culturally produced, which means:

> …they are neither natural or inevitable to mothering itself; likewise, because these mandates have been constructed, they can also be deconstructed.… We, in interrupting and deconstructing the patriarchal narrative of motherhood, are able to destabilize the hold this discourse has on the meaning and practice of mothering, and clear a space for the articulation of a counter-narrative of mothering.… This counter-narrative of empowered mothering, I wrote, "is concerned with imagining and implementing a view of mothering that is empowering to women as opposed to oppressive." (187-188)

Following O'Reilly's ideas, my doctoral research aims to amplify the discussion of how advertising and the culture of motherhood have been affecting our everyday mothering practices. To do so, I started my work listening to Brazilian and Canadian women.

During my qualitative fieldwork in Toronto, there was one specific drawing, done by a mother of two children, which really called my attention. I asked her to draw "how she felt as a mother," then she told me mothering was like "juggling." Her drawing and comments are as follows:

"You have work, your own friends, your kids, and looking after the home, making sure everybody eats healthy. There is a sort of dynamic, you need to keep all this in motion! Maybe it is juggling!"
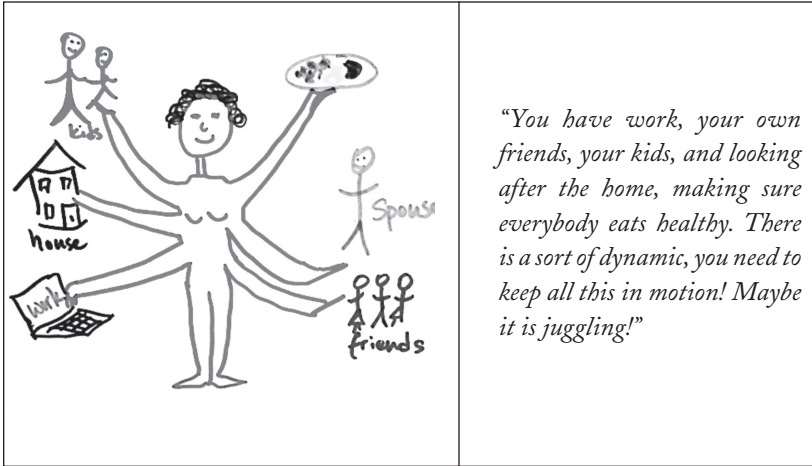
Inspired by her drawing and also by another women interviewed in São Paulo and Toronto, I kept thinking that all of us were, in fact, living like "Elastic Mothers at a Crossroad." In this sense, the Brazilian psychoanalyst Maria Helena Fernandes deeply expressed what my interviewees and I were feeling when she analyzed Helen Parr.

Helen Parr is the maternal character of the American computer-animated film *The Incredibles*, directed by Brad Bird and produced by Disney Pixar (2004). Better known as the superhero ElastiGirl, after marrying Mr. Incredible, Helen Parr became a dedicated spouse and mother of three children: a teenage girl who becomes invisible, an agile boy who runs very quickly and a baby with diverse superhuman abilities. Her body can be stretched and reshaped in different ways, from a parachute, to a rubber boat. Helen Parr also uses her elastic arms to separate her fighting children in a family dinner scene of the movie. According to Fernandes, the *elastic woman* represents the ideal postmodern woman. Fernandes highlights the fact that changes in cultural ideals are often the result of new social transformations and achievements, as well as of the abandonment of old interests due to the discovery of new interests and new needs. However, as time went by, the set of ideals that women are supposed to seek has been greatly extended. In Fernandes' analysis, women are currently confronting an accumulation of ideals: a broader-than-ever range of ideals that we are enjoined to reach.

> Stretched between a passive and maternal identification and an active and phallic identification, women have been trying to deal with the excess that characterizes all demands they must negotiated in everyday lives. This results in a depth accumulation, which requires an elasticity that never before we imagined as possible. (Fernandes 2, translation by author)

Fernandes says in order to fulfill this wide scope of ideals, the *elastic woman* needs also to have the ideal body, which means being thin, beautiful and in good shape. In addition, she must be: understanding, good-humored, "sexy," and a dedicated mother; she must sound cultured and well-informed; she must be cheerful, economically independent, professionally successful and, finally, serene and in control. In Fernandes' words:

> Engaged in the pursuit of the slim body and lean beauty ideals, the elastic woman throws herself into this insane race….Becoming a slave of a diverse scope of ideals, which she needs—at least—to get closer, the elastic woman feels deeply affected by its excess and exhaustion. Despite her incredible powers, she feels guilty when she finds out it is impossible to be all that is required from her. In conflict with herself and other people who surround her, the elastic woman is, by definition, guilty and powerless. Experiencing a painful feeling, she always feels like something has escaped out of her reach, something that always overflows her impossible everyday routine, then, she feels paralysed and helpless, and perceives that her body hurts! (4-5, translation by author)

I agree with Fernandes, based on what I have learned from the mothers I interviewed.

However, my concern is if elasticity is a demand which synthetizes the pursuit of this multitasked and perfect maternal ideal, exhaustion is often the price. After all, elastics may break. And the rupture of the desired stretching skills has been noticed in the contemporary psychopathologies—postpartum depression, panic disorder, physical-emotional stress and burn out syndrome, for example—which are already affecting some women in Brazil and in Canada.

Mapping the Brazilian Advertising Thematic Groups

The Brazilian research corpus includes advertisements that were published in *Pais e Filhos* and *Crescer* magazines from 2006 to 2013. Mapping the advertisements in this corpus resulted in four thematic groups with common

characteristics with respect to images, visual elements, messages and sales appeals; as well as to cultural ideals and maternal representations which stood out among advertising signs.

a) The first group consists of Brazilian advertisements that present images of pregnant women. Their messages seek to soothe insecurities and ambivalent feelings often associated with pregnant women. Their depictions of pregnant figures convey the image of an ideal pregnant woman who seems always quiet, serene, pure and asexual; unlike the pregnant women made of flesh and blood, who reported daily experiences of intense physical and emotional transformations. Perhaps advertising representations of pregnant women evoke such a calming feeling, because it is implicit that the depicted ideal consumer has already followed the advertiser's recommendation. By having joined the consumption rituals, the pregnant woman in the advertisement has already "everything which she needs," therefore, she feels completely ready for the arrival of the baby.

b) The majority of Brazilian ads fit into the second group, which comprises advertisements focused on images of mothers and babies. Their messages aim at provoking emotional responses from mothers of babies who are living at a symbiotic stage (see Lacan's Mirror Stage). Hence, in most advertisements, images of mothers and babies look each other in the eye: their pictures are framed in close-ups, communicating sensations of bonding, togetherness, happiness, peace and harmony.

Despite the fact that mothers appear totally available to care for their babies into the advertising scenes; in real life Brazilian mothers must return to work. Consequently, a majority of them feel guilty and worried about leaving their children with other people (nannies, day-cares, grandmothers), since full-time maternal availability is only an imaginary and ideal condition represented in advertising.

In this group, messages of protection, safety, comfort, care, bonding, total dedication and maternal affection insert consumer products into the symbiotic mother-child context. However, the discourse of happiness and togetherness does not include imperfections and everyday difficulties, which are very relevant experiences for contemporary mothers.

c) The third group of Brazilian advertisements was constituted by brands which integrated father figures into the familiar scenes. However, the appearance of father figures is uncommon in the advertising scenario studied in Brazil. Besides that, the few paternal depictions found generally had the fathers occupy secondary roles within the contexts illustrated: for instance, they appear behind mothers and babies, with their faces hidden or out of focus, as evidence that most advertisers tend to maintain mothers as their key target market and do not speak directly or exclusively to fathers.

d) Finally, the main characteristic of the fourth group was the absence of images of pregnant women, mothers and babies or father figures. Therefore, this last group was composed of Brazilian advertisements that used other verbal and visual resources to provoke emotional responses from mothers. Three key sales appeals were identified within this group:

1. Advertising messages associated with better maternal performance, and also reinforcing the ideals of multitasking maternal perfection.
2. Focus on product images, functional attributes and benefits: in this case, advertising lacks emotional appeals and an integration among brands, mother and children, but communicates product attributes and benefits that incorporate maternal functions.
3. Products and brands associated to supportive roles in children's growth, playful development and discoveries.

It is worth mentioning that the spontaneous attention of Brazilian interviewees was drawn by maternal images and depictions of pregnant women within the advertising corpus analyzed. Most Brazilian respondents focused their debates on emotional reactions and sensations evoked by advertising scenes. Consequently, I chose images as the main criteria to guide me when I was mapping the Brazilian advertising corpus into thematic groups, because visual signs provoked more impact among mothers than textual messages in São Paulo.

Because Cesarotto and I already published a detailed analysis of the Brazilian advertising mapping (see Mendonça and Cesarotto), I will present a more in depth analysis of Canada's findings in this paper.

Mapping the Canadian Advertising Thematic Groups

In Canada, the research includes advertisements placed in *Parents Canada*, *Canadian Family* and *Today's Parent* magazines from 2010 to 2013. But, unlike in São Paulo, the Torontonian respondents were less receptive, and more critical, of the advertising evaluated. Moreover, advertising images provoked less impact and lower engagement among them, in comparison to the reactions of women in São Paulo.

In general, the written messages provoked much more impact among the respondents in Toronto than did images and visual signs. Consequently, the focus of spontaneous attention in Toronto was verbal texts. The key issue raised by Canadian respondents related to how advertising communicates mothering practices. In other words, the strategies advertisers use to promote a certain standard of maternal performance, and to encourage the practice of

mothering according to the dominant values of the patriarchy and consumption culture. Consequently, semiotic analysis conducted on the Canadian advertising campaigns identified four new thematic groups, different from those that were already identified in Brazil.

Next, I will detail the Canadian advertising groups, but, before that, I would like to highlight that both Brazilian and Canadian analytical parameters were inspired by what I have learned from women who participated in qualitative research. As mentioned above, while Brazilian women focused on images, sensations and emotional aspects communicated by motherhood in advertising, Canadian women focused on verbal messages regarding mothering practices and patriarchal values within the culture of motherhood. The different reactions of the Canadian participants to the advertising material led me to a different set of parameters for analysis of the Canadian corpus. The different thematic groups that resulted provided an interesting framework for comparative analysis. Finally, I sketch the beginnings of such an analysis in the conclusion.

The mapping of Canadian advertisements resulted in four new thematic groups:

a) The first group consists of advertisements whose strategies undermine mothers and whose communication approaches evoked negative or unpleasant feelings among interviewees.
b) The second group consists of advertisements which promote better maternal performance. Their communication approaches evoked positive and pleasant feelings among respondents.
c) The third group consists of advertisements based on appeals to fear. These evoked potential risks towards the children, and therefore raised parental feelings of insecurity and, consequently, mobilized negative or unpleasant feelings among mothers.
d) The fourth group consists of advertisements whose strategies focused on the development of children through play, creativity and discovery. This group elicited positive and pleasant feelings among interviewees.

Feminist and Motherhood scholars (Hays, 1996; Douglas and Michaels, 2004; Warner, 2005; Katz Rothman, 2004 and 2007) state that the ways in which we raise our children nowadays have been evaluated as successful or unsuccessful, through measurements of performance and efficiency. These criteria are applied in the marketplace, which also guides advertising and mass media discourse. In this context, the parents-children relationship has been managed as a work project to be carried out efficiently.

Everyone craves happiness, which is associated not only with pleasure, satisfaction, and completeness, but most importantly with material achievement

which means success (Birman, 2010). Consequently, to produce winners, family everyday life becomes a game where everything relates to parents and children's performances, "and, of course, players play to win" (Warner, 2005, p.224).

In this sense, two key words—performance and strategy—stood out during the analysis of Canadian advertising. As the marketing scholars Stanton, Etzel and Walker (1994) have written, strategic planning is considered extremely important business management activities:

> Planning is deciding now what we are going to do later, including how and when we are going to do it. Without a plan, we cannot get things done effectively and efficiently, because we don't know what needs to be done or how to do it. (ibid 61).

Marketing is pragmatic. As Stanton, Etzel and Walker state, "an objective is simply a desired outcome. Effective planning must begin with a set of objectives that are to be achieved by carrying out plans." (ibid 62) Dense strategic planning guides and defines what should be communicated about brands and products in marketing operations. After all, product sales and advertising campaigns need to perform well and achieve the marketing and communication goals, which have been previously determined.

The problem is when this strategic logic is transferred to consumers' everyday lives. In such cases, there is also a migration of methods and criteria for evaluating mothers' performance. Practical recipes which indicate successful or socially appropriate mothering practices are often informed by the media, but they tend to ignore the mothers' life experiences and acquired learning. As a result, products and brands promise agility and better performance for mothers, as well as illusions of fulfillment, pleasure, satisfaction, security and protection for the children.

Canadian Advertisements Whose Strategies Undermine Mothers

The first group of Canadian advertisements communicates how mothers must act in order to meet the performance expectations, shaped by the patriarchal culture of motherhood. These strategies use appeals that devalue current maternal knowledge. And these campaigns also devalue diverse mothering practices, by constructing maternal representations that portray women in conservative, subservient and submissive positions, depictions which were disapproved of and criticized by the interviewees.

It is worth noticing the appropriation of maternal knowledge by advertisers in many ads of this group. Their messages initially diminish maternal skills, emphasizing feelings of guilt or failure related to maternal performance; soon

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Advance®. Learn more about our closest formula ever to breast milk at Similac.ca.

The point of departure in both advertisements is basically the same: both brands (Enfamil A+ and Similac Advance) begin talking about the problem, which consists of maternal "failure" to nourish babies in an adequate way, in order to position their products as ideal solutions. Paradoxically, despite the fact that interviewees criticized negative approaches of these campaigns, their texts actually do touch relevant concerns among mothers. It is worth noticing both products' names: Enfamil gathers the French word *enfant*, which means *child* and derives from Latin term *infans*: "one who does not speak or can not communicate through verbal language" (Veríssimo 6); plus *milk*, in English. Similac gathers the adjective, *similar*, and the term *lac*, a Latin word referring to milk, reinforcing the similarity between the formula and the mother's milk.

Other advertisements included in the first group, present maternal figures in submissive positions, reinforcing patriarchal values and traditional codes of gender and femininity. For instance, there is a Nutella advertisement, which was deeply criticized by interviewees for the domestic and servile attitude of the female figure that was serving breakfast for the children, behind the kitchen counter. Nutella's message was not only seen as irritating, but also considered questionable, since the product wasn't considered natural or adequate for a breakfast situation: "Their day. Made by Mom. Nutella.® All natural ingredients. No preservatives. No artificial colour. Source of Vitamin E."

Canadian Advertisements Whose Strategies Enhance Maternal Performance

The second group was composed of advertisements which claim to facilitate mothers' everyday lives using technology; as well as advertisers which claim to show a closer understanding of the intense daily routine of their multitasking target audience, employing a humorous tone of voice. These campaigns' images and messages connect with maternal "needs" in positive ways, aiming to mobilize their target and increasing their maternal performance.

For example, CTV Canada presents a couple of their morning show presenters juggling objects such as a ball, a laptop, a cell phone, and a pot; while a Vicks VapoRub advertisement presents two children jumping on a bed and their mother looking at them, standing at the bedroom door. Both campaigns refer to maternal daily juggling efforts in humorous ways and seek to demonstrate an understanding of the busy routines of Canadian mothers.

These advertisements actually generated identification with the everyday life situations of the interviewees. Therefore they position brands as allied to

mothers, using a pleasant tone of voice to transmit messages of adequacy with respect to cultural values of the public sphere, such as dynamism, speed and flexibility. Their messages are clear and objective:

> CTV Canada
> Making sense of your morning.
> CTV Canada AM. Weekdays mornings on CTV.

> Vicks Vaporub
> Sorry Vicks Vaporub only quiets their cough and cold symptoms.
> Trust Vicks VapoRub to soothe their coughs and nasal congestion with Vicks vapours.

Canadian Advertisements Focused on "Fear and Failure" Strategies, Evoking Parental Worries Towards their Children's

The third group of Canadian advertisements emphasizes potential risks or threats related to the children's safety, health, well-being and future. Through appeals that evoke parental worries related to the current well-being and the future development of their sons and daughters. By appealing to parents' needs for control and caution, these messages encourage the purchase of different types of products and services.

A threatening tone of voice is a common characteristic in the campaigns of this group. As a result, it was harshly criticized by interviewees from all three segments in Toronto (pregnant women, mothers of babies and mothers of children up to eight years of age): they named this group "*fear & failure strategies.*"

Despite the fact that our lived experience constantly indicates how unpredictable life can be, we all tend to believe in the illusion of control, because it is comfortable and also brings us desired wishes of safety and protection. As a result, any indication that our illusion of control over our children's safety is just that—an illusion—powerfully touches any mother or father.

In this regard, a campaign by the CIBC bank portrays a girl, looking into the blue sky, through a telescope. She watches the horizon through this instrument, which expands her vision towards objects anyone would like to see better. Because we generally read magazines from the left to the right page, the CIBC advertisement invites us to perform this visual motion, from left to right, while we observe the image of this little blonde girl and read its headline on the left page, which says: "Expanding horizons. Because in life there's no shortage of things to save for."

Below, and also to the left, we see a text box that says: "Life adds up. Your finances should too. CIBC eAdvantage™ Savings Account™." The "natural"

life trajectory is envisioned as progressive, happy and fulfilling; but—in this campaign—this dream will only become possible if the family saves money! On the right page, the advertiser warns that customers must save today, in order to allow their families to enjoy adventures and exciting opportunities in the future:

> CIBC Bank (eAdvantage™ Savings Account)
> Whether it's sharing exciting new adventures and opportunities with your family or setting money aside for the future, a CIBC eAdvantage™ Savings Account helps you built your savings. Speak to a CIBC advisor today. Visit and branch, go to cibc.com/savemore or call. CIBC. For what matters.

Another advertisement in this group, by Children's Education Funds, has a message which first threatens, then encourages parents to invest in the future of their children. On the left page, their warning headline says: "Kids grow fast. So do tuition costs." Next, on the right page, they motivate parents to save some money to guarantee their children's future: "Nurture the dream." Finally, the text offers an appropriate solution, which is Children's Education Funds, itself, of course:

> Children's Education Funds Inc.
> Before your child grows another inch, start saving with Children's Education Funds Inc. CEFI has the greatest selection of Register Education Saving Plan offerings. It's easy and very affordable. You can get started for under $10.00 per month! Keep saving: you'll be surprised at how much you can accumulate…. Visit www.cefi.ca or call 1 (800) 246-1203.

The Children's Education Funds advertisement portrays a forest landscape, with lots of green trees, where we can see a father figure who is holding a little boy over his shoulders. The father points up, to the treetops, so that the boy can look up. Once again, we are invited to perform a visual movement, this time ascending. These two campaigns both use visual strategies which connect parental desires for their children's achievement and consequent success in the future.

This thematic group also includes campaigns that anticipate maternal concerns, raising anxiety among expecting mothers. For instance, Ovol, which is a medicine to soothe baby colic, asks pregnant women if they are prepared to face the upcoming suffering:

> Ovol
> It's most beautiful time in your life. But if your baby has colic, will

you be prepared? Colic occurs in about 10 percent of babies. Bouts of crying can last from one to two hours. Ovol® is a brand pharmacists recommend most for relief of infant colic due to gas. Easy to administer and 100 percent alcohol free, Ovol® can bring your peace of mind when you need it most. Be prepared for colic with Ovol®.

Using the same strategy, an advertisement by the company Boiron, for Camilia, a medicine intended to relieve teething, depicts an illustration of a baby, who is crying dramatically. Its text warns mothers: "First tooth, first pain, first treatment. Boiron® offers Camilia®, a homeopathic medicine for teething babies. Discover Boiron® unit-doses, particularly well suited for little-ones!" In both situations, that portrayed by Ovol and that portrayed by Camilia/Boiron, pain may happen or not; the sales appeal, however, is focused on anticipating maternal worries and encouraging consumption.

Canadian Advertisements that Appeal to Stimulating Children's Playful Development

In Canada, the fourth group of advertisements encourages mothers to support a playful development of children, through providing an everyday learning atmosphere, filled with scenarios of family fun and magical moments. Their campaigns depict families indoors and outdoors, in moments of leisure inside the home, or adventure and fun away from home.

Just as family outdoor experiences are now shaped by consumption codes, the moments of everyday life indoors have also been shaped by diverse objects and gadgets, such as toys, books, games, etc., claiming to help parents in educating the children in joyful ways. The belief in the magic of a child's exploration of the world lends a sort of a magical Disney-esque mood to everything from children's room decoration to their birthday parties. According to this belief, life needs to be always fun. Everything should match and shine during the spectacular princess or superhero party. Every "good mother" must wish for and, above all, put on a perfect production!

Outside the home, families supposedly need to travel to perfect destinations during weekends or summer vacations. Moments of instant fun and fabulous adventures are mandatory. At Transat Resorts your family can experience the "perfect holiday," but if you would rather go for adventure in a "perfect campsite," just buy whatever you need to "set it all up in a few minutes" at Canadian Tire:

Transat Resorts
Title: Our select resorts. Your perfect family holiday. Text: …this entirely renovated resort provides the backdrop for a fabulous family

vacation! Enjoy the best of Riviera Nayarit: breathtaking scenery, fine dining, a kids' club your children will love, a lively disco, a relaxing spa and superior services. Ready to have some fun?

Canadian Tire
Title: Family adventure bring it on. Text: It takes hours to drive the family to the perfect campsite, but it shouldn't take more than a few minutes to set it all up. Broadstone™ pop-up tents and accessories make camping a breeze. Find more products designed for life in Canada only in Canadian Tire.

Consumer culture capitalizes a child's play, development and discoveries, and adds lots of branded magic into it. Advertising campaigns invite mothers to incorporate their new role of providing their families with moments of playful fun. Even indoors, everyday life now must be filled with magic and sensory exploration, because educating children appropriately must be fun. After all, contemporary children are said to need stimulation to develop creativity, intelligence, imagination and other skills. All of this growth requires parental involvement.

Conclusion

In Brazil, most advertising messages are aimed at meeting the insecurities of pregnant women and mothers of babies, and the majority of campaigns depict mothers and babies in poses of warmth and harmony. In Canada, this was not the case. There were, however, similarities:

a) In both countries, father figures are infrequent in the advertising studied.
b) Moreover, appealing to the idea of learning as play is considered an effective approach, to encourage mothers in supporting their sons and daughters' development, with the help of consumer products in a magical and fun atmosphere.
c) In both countries, advertising promises better maternal performance. In this way, campaigns analyzed in Canada and in Brazil both reinforce the existing patriarchal culture of motherhood values. Advertisers set implicit standards for how Brazilians and Canadians should practice mothering, in trying to sell a wide range of products using both rational appeals (convenience, better nutrition, killing 99.9 percent of viruses and bacteria, etc.) and emotional appeals (caring, comfort, safety, security well-being).

Nevertheless, I must emphasize that it is not only patriarchal values that are communicated, but also the ideologies of neoliberal capitalism and individualism. Both of these sets of values also guide contemporary maternal performances. North (and South) American media culture instructs mothers to be dynamic, efficient, versatile and flexible in both countries studied. However, these media pressures have been affecting the women we interviewed in Toronto more deeply and more negatively than in São Paulo.

As we have learned through qualitative research, Torontonian mothers had reported lonely, exhausting and more intense mothering work. That might explain why Canadian respondents' general reactions to advertisements were more critical.

Practical recipes for better maternal performance are stamped on the covers of both Brazilian and Canadian magazines. But the fear of failure seems to be affecting Torontonian mothers, in the surveyed sample (middle-class women, readers of the magazines studied), in a deeper way.

Torontonian interviewees helped us to map *Motherhood in Advertising* by opening new perspectives, which contrast as complementary to the thematic groups previously identified in Brazil. Their deeper criticism of the ideal of maternal perfection was particularly salient. The Torontonian mothers expressed more intensely how media pressure has been affecting their mothering practices and self-images, and influencing feelings of guilt and exhaustion.

Finally, from the perspective of motherhood studies this research may itself be interpreted as a critical analysis of advertising signs, considering different practices of mothering and stimulating the deconstruction of the patriarchal culture of motherhood.

My research stage in Toronto was deeply important for conducting a cross-cultural study. I finish this article by expressing my gratitude to my research advisors (Dr. Oscar Cesarotto and Dr. Andrea O'Reilly) and also to the women who participated in my qualitative fieldwork in both cities. Last but not least, there is a lot to be discussed by motherhood scholars concerning advertising, consumption, motherhood and mothering. I hope what I have just presented motivates scholars who wish to extend this debate.

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HELENA VISSING

Triumphing Over the Body

Body Fantasies and Their Protective Functions

Pregnancy, birth, and motherhood exert tremendous pressure on all of a woman's boundaries: physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and social. In this article, I will discuss psychological boundary functions in relation to reproduction from psychoanalytic perspectives with a somatic focus. Reproductive functions pose special challenges for female boundary development. As the boundary transgressions of motherhood exert unique psychosomatic pressure, anxieties about loss and vulnerability are elicited, requiring the development of psychological defenses. I analyze two narratives in Western mainstream culture: The Supermodel Mother and Orgasmic Birth. The Supermodel Mother is untouched by the vulnerabilities connected to pregnancy, childbirth, and motherhood. This narrative is formed in mainstream media through preoccupation with celebrity pregnancy. Orgasmic Birth is cultivated in home birth movements, where the notion of a more truthful childbirth is elevated to an ecstatic and spiritual event of female self-realization. I will argue that these narratives are illusory solutions to the boundary challenge of reproduction and that they serve to protect against body anxieties through idealization. They are narratives namely about the body because they serve to protect against pre-verbal material from an unconscious relational realm that is not available for verbalization. The protective function of these fantasies lies in their contribution to a feeling of triumph over the body.

Female Boundary Development and Reproduction

This article is inspired by Gentile's study of the increase in images of pregnancy in mainstream media post 9/11 and the debate this study evoked. Gentile demonstrates a marked increase in media representation of pregnancy in her quantitative and qualitative analysis. She argues that the focus on pregnancy

can be understood as an attempt to instill faith in an uncanny and uncertain future, and discusses the implications of this form of temporal linking (Gentile). The study provoked several responses, one in which Zeavin points to the underlying unconscious dynamics at work in the fantasmatic narrative of The Supermodel Mother. Zeavin suggests that it provides us with a fantasied escape from the worrying aspects of what the female body is exposed to in childbirth (59). I wish to elaborate on this idea with a deeper examination of the bodily fantasies and their functions in the vicissitudes of female boundary development. My aim is to emphasize the importance of establishing the body as a central vehicle for expressions of intrapsychic and interpersonal meanings that are difficult, if not impossible, to verbalize.

Humans share the basic condition that we come into being through a female body. However obvious, this has profound psychological implications that are reflected in cultural narratives. Orbach, Furman, and Balsam are some of the few psychoanalysts who have written specifically on the interplay between female psychological development, the reproductive function of women, and the role of the female body. Their writings are based on the assumption that the female body and female psychological development are inseparable. They approach female development from a life cycle perspective in which body changes in the course of a woman's life are integral to an understanding of her emotional life. I will draw on these psychoanalytic writings with somatic focus to demonstrate their explanatory power in relation to anxieties and fantasies of reproduction.

Psychoanalytic and Somatic Perspectives

There is wide agreement in psychoanalytic literature, that pregnancy and motherhood will reactivate a woman's relational conflict history particularly with her own mother. From a psychoanalytic perspective with somatic focus, the bodily changes of motherhood will elicit the core of the first body ego experience. Balsam has elaborated on Freud's statement that "the ego is first and foremost a body ego" (26) by emphasizing that objects are then first and foremost bodily objects (Balsam). This somatic focus is her starting point for her theories on body pride and vulnerability and the tension between them as central themes in female development and reproduction in particular. In line with this, Orbach has contended that our perceptions of our bodies are outcomes of the intimate relationships we make with our surroundings, and consequently, the earliest relationship is key to understanding body image development (*Bodies*). She has paraphrased Winnicott's famous statement that there is no such thing as a baby, into "[t]here is no such thing as 'a body'. There is only a body as an outcome of relationship" ("Losing Bodies" 391). Because bodies only exist in relationships to other bodies, a female's relationship

with her body is an outcome of the intimate mother-child relationship in the enactments of cultural dictates vis-à-vis the body (ibid 393). The imprints of the mother's feelings about her body have a profound effect especially on the daughter (Orbach, *Bodies*). Orbach argues that this delicate dynamic of the mother-daughter relationship is facing particularly difficult challenges today because of the way the female body is being presented and reshaped by visual media culture ("Losing Bodies" 392).

Furman has described how a mother invests her child as a bodily part of herself which she must gradually release and transfer bodily ownership to (139). This delicate process requires flexible body boundaries. A woman's history of dynamics and conflicts from the psychosomatic relational matrix is inevitably stirred up in the transition to motherhood. As the boundary transgressions of motherhood exert unique psychosomatic pressure, deep anxiety is elicited, requiring the development of defenses. The physical experience of motherhood is potentially horrifying because of the tremendous pressure on boundaries. The maternal experience is imbued with anxiety as well as arousal evoked by the boundary transgression. This fluidity of boundaries holds powerful creative and destructive energy. It is no wonder that strong defenses are necessary when a woman is faced with the boundary pressure of motherhood. Addressing fantasies about reproduction must include addressing not only the intimate body-mind relationship, but also the specific meanings of the woman's bodily changes and their interplay with personal and cultural fantasies about her body.

The Supermodel Mother

> There was a bathtub, and in this bathtub, in a mess of long expensive limbs and warm water, a baby. It was born. Giving birth, the supermodel mother muses as she lies back afterwards, her hair swaddled juicily in a scented moisturising masque, was not dissimilar to being backstage at a couture show.… You don't see what mothers are making such a big deal about—there was no pain, or fuss, or ugliness. It was basically Iyengar yoga with bath water and a bit of clotted blood. Beauty, you tell your assistant, as she turns over your meditation tape, is the ultimate anaesthetic. (Wiseman)

In this provocative description of a supermodel giving birth by Wiseman, we may be amused, but perhaps also disgusted by the eerie quality of the scene. The idea of the supermodel is an otherworldly being created in a fictional space between media, fashion culture, and our fantasies. However, she does reproduce, and it has generated increasing attention in visual media. "Bump

Watch" columns monitor the nooks and crannies of female celebrities' bodies during all stages from pre-pregnancy, during, and after the birth. In light of current visual media culture, scrutiny of the female body is not remarkable in itself. The special focus on the maternal body and its changes is.

Gentile's analysis points to a cultural splitting off of anxiety onto the female body. This idea is shared by Orbach, who argues that we are born into bodily instability today, which is causing a loss of the body and a preponderance of bodily insecurity. Gentile claims that pregnancy is the perfect vehicle and target for cultural anxiety because it can embody an ambivalent relationship to an unknown future. A fantasy of perfection is a strong antidote for helplessness and anxiety. The Supermodel Mother is a fantasy that serves to defy our dread for our mortality and vulnerability.

Zeavin agrees with Gentile's analysis, but adds her focus on the underlying dynamics at work in the narrative of the Supermodel Mother. Real pregnancy transforms a woman's body and identity in both terrifying and rewarding ways. The Supermodel Mother is above these bodily signs; she is untouched by the physical changes of childbirth, as if it never happened, which Zeavin argues is exactly the point. The Supermodel Mother is the perfect icon by which to represent the predicament of freezing time and dispensing part, present, and future. Zeavin concludes that "[t]he celebrity pregnancy marks the arrival of a new cultural family romance, one where the woman is all-capable" (60). This narrative of an über-woman as the ideal birther and mother offers important things to identify with.

Orgasmic Birth

Pascali-Bonaro's documentary "Orgasmic Birth: The Best-Kept Secret" from 2008 presented a radically different approach to childbirth than that of mainstream obstetrics and was received with overwhelming interest. In 2010, a book based on the documentary was published (Davis and Pascali-Bonaro).

Orgasmic Birth must be understood in the context of the birth rights movement that began in the 1970s. It started as a wave of critique of the way the obstetric system in the U.S. and Western countries had developed in a medicalized direction (Clare Jones 100). Pioneers were Lamaze and Dick-Read who developed psychoprophylactic preparation methods for childbirth. A central person in the birth rights movement is midwife and activist Ina May Gaskin, who lead the development of an independent midwifery model in a Tennessee commune called The Farm from 1971 and onwards. Her writings and advocacy have made a significant influence of the birth rights movement, including Orgasmic Birth.

Gaskin states in the movie:

It is possible to have an ecstatic birth—in fact, that is the best nat-
ural high that I know of. And these states of consciousness are best
reached when a woman is fully aware and fully awake. Women don't
have a way to know how their body works until they really try it out
in birth. I think that women can be just completely surprised by the
change in them from giving birth—you have something powerful in
you—that fierce thing comes up—and I think babies need moms to
have that fierceness—you feel like you can do anything and that's the
feeling we want moms to have.

I do not wish to engage in a discussion about whether orgasmic births
are possible or the rightness of different birth practices. My sole focus is to
explore the underlying dynamics of the narrative of orgasmic birth. The idea
of approaching birth as a liberating sexual event, rather than a strenuous task,
is intriguing and compelling. In my view, Gaskin's description of birth has an
epiphanic tone of the "true-ness" of birth. The idea of a special state of con-
sciousness is spiritual: the idea of a revelation of one's body's capacities that
will powerfully unfold. A higher purpose is alluded to with the mentioning
of the fierceness the baby needs from the mother. The ideal birth is ecstatic,
consciousness expansive, and revelatory, and all in the service of the baby. With
this concept of the true nature of birth, it follows that there is also a true birther:
a mother who is fully awake and open to her innate strength that she has been
ignorant of, which she will embrace for her baby's sake.

Trust in the female body's capacities is without doubt crucial in childbirth.
There is clearly great wisdom in the notion of a more sensual, sensitive, and
loving attitude towards birth. Balsam identifies a scarcity in psychoanalytic
literature of focus on body pride and vulnerabilities in relation to childbirth. She
argues that "[o]nce we admit a closer connection between sex and procreation
than is customary in contemporary analytic theory, we are confronted with a
potentially universal human fascination with not only the sex act, but also with
the underlying fantasies about the function of the female body in pregnancy and
childbirth." (97). In line of Balsam's argument, I believe attempts to integrate
sexuality and passion in childbirth care should be recognized. I acknowledge
the motivation for encouraging confidence and embracing the possible pleasure
and pride of childbirth in Orgasmic Birth. However, I believe the cultural
narratives that arise from Orgasmic Birth may result in the opposite, because
terror and ambivalence is denied.

Zeavin provocatively proclaims her psychoanalytic stance:

No matter how thrilling the birth of a baby, no matter how much
wanted, it is always in a sense traumatic. Giving birth inevitably

evokes our most primitive fears and fantasies: many women describe the fear of coming undone, of violence to the inside of their bodies, a fear of being unseemly and even grotesque. Pain itself is a source of fear as is the feeling of being out of control. The idea of a baby inside of one's own body, though easily romanticized and managed with an effusion of care, is scary to contemplate. (63)

Zeavin's stance may appears like the opposite extreme of Gaskin's statement, but her psychoanalytic approach offers a profound recognition of terror as part of life and namely the maternal experience that is not recognized in Orgasmic Birth. Balsam's idea that terror and vulnerability is closely related to body pride and satisfaction demonstrates the explosive potential of such an ambivalence-loaded realm as motherhood. The terror of birth appears to be denied in the concept of Orgasmic Birth. The idea that a completely wondrous, ecstatic, and fulfilling birth experience is not only possible, but the more "true" nature of the female body's capacities is the epiphanic message. Less ideal birth experiences are acknowledged, but are explained by the cold-hearted world of hospital obstetrics and lack of a caring and sensually attuning atmosphere for the mother. Birth in and of itself is orgasmic in nature, if only the true nature of birth is invited and accommodated for.

It is telling that The Supermodel Mother and Orgasmic Birth narratives confluence. Several celebrities have joined the home birth movement, some as central advocates, most notably talk show host Ricky Lake. In the documentary "More Business of Being Born", the sequel to Ricki Lake and Abby Epstein's landmark documentary "The Business of Being Born" from 2008, supermodels Gisele Bündchen, Christy Turlington-Burns, and Cindy Crawford give testimonial interviews about their empowering home births. In this way, choosing a home birth in the spirit of Orgasmic Birth offers an intimate community feeling with women of the elite. It is namely the air of elitism that I believe is expressive of the underlying dynamics of these narratives.

The Function of Fantasies

The fantasies of the Supermodel Mother and Orgasmic Birth offer the notion that motherhood without any boundary pressure is possible. The fantasy of Orgasmic Birth is an outcome not only free of problems or anxiety, but also victorious. Zeavin states that "[i]dealization helps us through nightmares—personal or societal" (61). The fantasies offer necessary protection as they help to create a sense of authority and cohesiveness through control over the body. Threats against boundaries and bodily integrity are warded off. The narratives address central pre-verbal conflict themes through the focus on the body and

its capacities. In light of Orbach's notion of the female body as one marked by anxiety in contemporary Western media culture, these fantasies seem quite appealing, especially for new generations of mothers who have grown up with mass media's visual scrutiny of the female body.

The pregnant body is intriguing for its visceral sexual and fertile meanings. But the moment after birth, the post-partum body is intimidating and imbued with shame. We desire to see everything, we are hovering over the bump, and yet we do not want to see the scary reality of the post-partum body. The idea of the post-partum body is the embodiment of the mother in her most raw and vulnerable state and therefore also our own most vulnerable state as newborns; quite a disturbing thought with all its triggers of pre-verbal somatically embedded conflict. It is no wonder we must keep it (or her) at bay. The media's harsh denigration of the post-partum body seems to be an effective defense that is part of the paradox: we scrutinize the pregnant supermodel, but we do not allow for her post-partum body. The only allowed outcome is the victorious post-baby body that shows no signs of ever having had the baby.

Triumphing Over the Body

The Supermodel Mother has triumphed over the maternal body. Her transition to motherhood is a victorious and orgasmic event. Afterwards, all physical signs are erased, but she can still reap the satisfaction of the power of the new maternal status. As Zeavin intelligently remarks, "[s]he can be the mother without embodying the terrifying aspects of the mother" (63), and I want to add: the terrifying aspects of the motherhood experience, namely maternal ambivalence and the physical terror of childbearing.

Balsam addresses competitiveness in relation to reproduction and particularly childbirth. She believes women's concerns and disappointments about their birthing capacities are about female-to-female rivalry about body power: "For women, their own birth experiences and deliveries go to the heart of their fierce competition with each other. On this platform, they either "win" or "lose" as females" (96). The intensive comparisons, mirroring and rivalry between mothers can also be understood as the longing for deeply needed reassurances that mothers need in their struggles with guilt, anxiety, and maternal ambivalence. In my view, both competitive impulses and needs for reassurance seem equally important in this drama of the female body and its capacities. I suggest that the competitive qualities of the triumphant body fantasies are closely related to the ambivalence of archaic longing for the mother combined with the hatred toward her, in her function as that first *bodily* love object. This ambivalence may propel a woman to create triumphant fantasies of her body and its capacities. The body is heavily used to symbolize and communicate emotional material,

especially in narratives like those presented. The female body is the intrinsic venue for expressions of pleasure and terror, pride and vulnerability. Fantasies about the female body and its reproductive capacities are particularly ripe for these themes.

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Folio

Editor's Notes

It's a great pleasure to feature Kirun Kapur in this issue of *Folio*. Kirun Kapur is the winner of the *Arts & Letters* Rumi Prize in Poetry and the Antivenom Poetry Prize for her first book, *Visiting Indira Gandhi's Palmist*. Her work has appeared in *AGNI, Poetry International, FIELD, The Christian Science Monitor* and many other journals. She has taught creative writing at Boston University and has been awarded fellowships from The Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, Vermont Studio Center, and MacDowell Colony. She is the founder and co-director of the Boston-area arts program *The Tannery Series* and serves as Poetry Editor at *The Drum Literary Magazine*, which publishes exclusively in audio form. Kapur grew up in Hawaii and now lives north of Boston with her husband and son.

Novelist Andre Dubus III has praised Kapur's work for its ability to capture "the spiritual resonance of the past on the present" while former U.S. Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky has expressed admiration for the range of her first collection, a book remarkable for the way it "encompasses many phases of history, several religions, multiple myths, family stories, eros and terrorism, poetry and war, cultural clashes and cultural overlaps." In this selection from *Visiting Indira Gandhi's Palmist,* readers will encounter richly detailed poems exploring the turns of fate that shape familial destiny and maternal identity.

Family stories run the gamut from cautionary tale to exercise in nostalgia, qualities that make them as captivating as they are artistically compelling. Facts can be fuzzy or take on the irrefutable nature of myth and, as is especially true of parents, the actors in these dramas are easily overshadowed by the roles they've come to inhabit in our lives. Yet Kapur's keen eye and compassionate voice render the familiar figures of youth as irresistible characters in their own right: here we meet a father who "quotes Frost as easily as Ghalib" ("Meat and

Marry"); a mother whose singular personality is effaced "beneath the Benedictine coif" in the line-up of novitiate nuns she's joined ("Family Portrait, USA"). As she recreates the origins of their joint histories, Kapur reveals difficult truths without compromising the formal rigors of art.

In "Nursery Rhymes (or The Time She Chased My Mother with a Carving Knife," Kapur revisits a terrifying scene, imagining the fear felt by a child "taught/to overlook the stench of last night's gin/to kneel, say prayers over all your sins" as she scrambles to escape the drunken mother chasing her. The poet sets her account against the backdrop of familiar lines from Mother Goose, creating a chilling counterpoint to underscores the vulnerability of the child.

"Jack be nimble Jack be quick," she writes, summoning up the past's terror into the present, "don't be afraid/you'll slip, fear eats up time, eats candle sticks,/the chime of your childhood will find its silence,/quietly untie, like a shoelace." This approach provides the poet with an effective tool for re-entering the moment:

> Oh, Mother, may I
>
> stand between you and my grandmother,
> you and you not being my mother, I believe
> it was the holy ghost of me, there in the foyer,
> dining room, kitchen, in the living room blocking
>
> her drunken way, keeping her from falling
> on the knife, keeping you 20 paces ahead….

In this way, the poet constructs a healing narrative whose vivid testimony transcends the trauma. In Kapur's hands, art is a means of discovery—a vehicle for apprehending grace and paying tribute to the survivor's resiliency.

Reflecting on the composition process of poems in *Visiting Indira Ghandi's Psalmist* for the *Beloit Poetry Journal*, Kapur commented on the challenges of writing about violence and the efficacy of form as a means of modulating the sensational. She observes,

> …I happened to be at a reading where a poet read several sestinas.
> I came away thinking about repetition: a word or phrase paced and
> repeated becomes an incantation, a ritual, a structure. Isn't that
>   exactly
> how the telling of these stories had worked in my family? And what
> about variation, the breaking of expected repetitions? Might it en-
> act retelling, misremembering, the rupture of family structures and
> rituals?

This very enactment of remembering and retelling is evident in "Light," where the poet memorializes the suffering of Partition, the gender violence that ensued, and the deleterious effects of silence in public and private history. Here, the enclosed space of the kitchen—one where domestic advice is freely given—becomes confining, a quality underscored by the pantoum's interlocking lines:

> Knead carefully to make the atta.
> Good girls know how to make good puris.
> Make sure the gluten doesn't toughen,
> A puri should be light and golden.
>
> Good girls know how to make good puris.
> They don't ask for the old stories.
> *A puri should be light and golden,*
> *Like your cousin's and your cousin's cousin's.*

Although the speaker's aunt may be resistant when directly questioned, stories are shared in whispers among the family's women. In Kapur's cinematic recreation, the women name "lost aunts and daughters," including "one niece who could have been recovered" but "whose brothers refused to take her back" as a solitary scene widens into a broader historical current. Kapur's poetry gives us an unforgettable glimpse into the bonds between mothers and daughters, tracing the connections between private history and the inheritance of kin—a timeless and necessary wisdom.

—Jane Satterfield

KIRUN KAPUR

Anthem

Love begins in a country
Where oranges weep sweetness
And men piss in the street.

Your hands are forever binding
Black strands in a plait. Your mother's
Childhood friend has steeped

Your skin in coconut oil, tucked
Her daughter beside you—the night
Is a womb, live with twins.

Heat's body presses every body.
Sharp chop of your uncle's cough
Clocks the hours; your sister's washing,

The rush of your thoughts. Morning
Is nine glass bangles hoisting sacks
Of sugar from the floor. I'm not talking

About a place, but a country:
Its laws are your mother, its walls
Are your dreams. The flag it flies

Is your father waving.

KIRUN KAPUR

Family Portrait, USA

One photograph—the only—with another woman's writing on the back:
New Mexico. Novitiate. 1963?

Nearly impossible to see my mother beneath the Benedictine coif—
Nineteen young nuns in a row, each face

Framed separately by immaculate white wimples.
This was my mother's family,

Between the family she left and the family she made—
Nineteen sisters carved like cameos, bright, but indistinct.

It was cold. We milked cows in a barn.
When we sang, "Cast away the dreams of darkness," I could see

Those words carried over the hay, on our breath.
At night, in the basement, nineteen women swabbed the backs of refugees.

I didn't know who they were. It didn't matter. An open sore
Is an open sore. You don't need to know anything about it.

I want to see, though I know my mother's face:
The French nose; the brown eyes greened in anger.

I have no faith, just a sore and a story. I want to come to a place
Where I don't need to know anything more about it.

KIRUN KAPUR

He Who Does Not Have The Church As His Mother Does Not Have God As His Father

My mother was the sort of daughter
who knew the doctor's number;
whether the spoons were polished;

which hand-cut glasses, sparkling
in her mother's dark china cabinet
hid vodka or gin. She knew

the exact number of steps
between her bed and the landing,
the landing and the front door;

whether there was milk or ice or aspirin;
when to spend two nights with neighbors,
quietly washing their dishes. She read

to be certain when Lily of The Valley
would bloom, under downstairs windows,
near her father, entombed in his chair.

A crucifix swung from her bedroom wall,
the sober Mary hung in the hall, patiently
steadying her baby. My mother

buttoned her own coat to the chin,
repeated *The Lord's Prayer*,
so she wouldn't waste time

on talk about the handsome French dentist,
his poor child and that Irish wife.
When she found four children

alone in the woods, she knew
exactly what to do: she towed them home
and washed them in her mother's perfumed oil.

KIRUN KAPUR

Meat and Marry

A nun and a swami walk into a bar. O.K., not a bar, exactly—unless you count the salad bar—but, she is a nun and in the cafeteria of International House she walks in on her life, part joy, part joke. The room bustles— Asians, Africans, Scandinavians—a UN with plastic knives. It's 1965. She's spent several years in a convent, so even white Americans look stunningly foreign. A guide is talking, rearranging the pleats of a peacock silk sari. My mother tries to focus on her voice—high, tipping suddenly, like a flute played on a roller coaster: *no pork at this table, here no beef, Kosher, chopsticks, here no meat.* She can't identify the food. Nine kinds of turban are within reach. People course by—black, blonde, red, yellow—they carry flimsy trays, but speak so earnestly. Out of this Technicolor glory, the world's every possible character—my father. Out of the whole universe of words, he'll speak just one, in English. He is the same hue as her first, brown leather Bible; his eyes flash like the buckles on a young nun's shoe. She'll learn he isn't a swami, he speaks five languages, quotes Frost as easily as Ghalib. She turns in a confused circle. He doesn't touch her, just inclines his head politely toward his own plate. His voice is low, like a rocking boat, Eat.

KIRUN KAPUR

At the Convent of San Marco, Looking at Fra Angelico's Annunciation (or If Your Mother's Name Is Also Mary)

Into the fresco's sunlit room, the word
falls, a stone that she can't move. She knows

the tomb is sealed and sees the end illuminated.
Her miracle takes seconds. Shocked

to find the day resumed, she stumbles with the news—
she will live. I'm studying

the light, the faint cracks in the paint,
the mother, handmaid, wife:

the moment she is nailed to it.
My mother was born in broad day,

roof of her mouth un-fused and christened, Mary.
Father O'Grady held the babe, urged surgery:

Without the ability to properly confess her sins,
the mouth of Hell awaits her. I wait

for Mary to speak in the convent's cell,
walls scrubbed white—the Angel's perfect face

already turning away—wondering if a soul hangs
on what can be spoken clearly. My mother was one

of many: Mary Therese, Mary Margaret,
Mary Benedicta, Mary Genevieve, Mary

of the cleft palate and the ether mask,
who must be careful not to whistle when she speaks,

Mary, painted as though it happened right
where I stand, under a monk's peaked doorway,

that she bent half over her book and spoke.
I'll tell you this, in the worst minute

of my life, I didn't recognize my feet or hands,
too bright, too hard to breathe, but I could hear

a voice instructing me: *Put on your shoes.*
Put on your shoes and stand.

KIRUN KAPUR

Nursery Rhymes
(or The Time She Chased My Mother with a
Carving Knife)

All around the cobbler's bench,
you, Mother, who were taught
to overlook the stench of last night's gin,
to kneel, say prayers over all your sins,

but the glint of the knife was louder
than anything Mother Superior,
Mother Goose said, louder than crinoline
and rings and the ticking of heels on linoleum,

Jack be nimble Jack be quick, don't be afraid
you'll slip, fear eats up time, eats candle sticks,
the chime of your childhood will find its silence,
quietly untie, like a shoelace—Oh, Mother, may I

stand between you and my grandmother,
you and you not being my mother, I believe
it was the holy ghost of me, there in the foyer,
dining room, kitchen, in the living room blocking

her drunken way, keeping her from falling
on the knife, keeping you 20 paces ahead
whispering, *hush little baby don't say a word,*
someday you will buy me a mocking bird,

which will turn out to be a parakeet I name Anela,
Hawaiian for *angel*, but first we must go
all around the mulberry bush, mulberry bush,
mulberry bush, it was too early for me

and you still had to be the daughter, but I was
the spirit pushing the closet door shut, begging,
stay hidden a while longer, then open the door to me,
I'm coming to you angry and blind as mice.

KIRUN KAPUR

Basic Geography

i.
If you die in Varanasi, you go straight to heaven,
as my mother nearly did. Free

from grueling cycles of rebirth, you'll never
have to hold your daughter, crying all night,

watch her slip a ring on her finger and promise
to love another as much as she loves you,

mourn petals whipped from roses by a brisk fall wind
or the puddle curdled with oil,

sky darkened, weather turned. You will live
with Shiva and his radiant body, as he meditates

on death, desire—the long shining cloth
that was your life. High up on Mount Kailash,

you can ask the truth of anything—
but first, you must die in Varanasi,

burn your body in the ghat,
as my mother almost did, one February.

ii.
My father's mother understood
why the Christian God had sent his son.
Relying on the good behavior
of your sons: it's what an Indian would do.
But why a mighty God would have just one—
this she couldn't credit. Of course,
it ended badly: *an only child*
will always be a sorrow to his parents.

iii.
My mother's mother promised
we would reach the Holy Land
the year I turned sixteen.
County Tipperary, she meant,
a miracle of greens, site

of her mother's teen-aged annunciation,
plagues of strained engagements
and masonry accidents. When Dr. Sullivan
explained about her liver, she waved it away:
All that cheap Communion wine.

iv.
At the Mahadevi Temple,
I wanted to become the Lady,
painted with patient eyes
and skulls ruffling her throat,
shied when the priest reached
to bless my head—I swore
his beard was alive. *Little daughter,*
have no fears. His hands
were so soft on my face,
I looked away, to find a brass pot

bristling with marigolds.
He stroked ash, sandalwood paste
above my brow— *Fear nothing.*
The fate of you and yours
is written here. I bowed
beside his toes—in socks
embossed with Playboy rabbit ears.
He was laughing, but
I held my head up straight,
felt him stake the holy mark
between my eyes,
an explorer, believing
he's the first to plant his flag.

v.
Pass down the nave,
through begettings
and crusades,
cross the transept,
we stand at the central mystery:
the flesh that isn't only flesh—
eating, sleeping, dying—
flesh that wonders, feels
betrayed, must be crowned
with thorns on a dry hillside,
or—between the lettuces—be

cudgeled by a brother with a spade.
Blood and body beneath the apse—
we swallow the incarnation's
exact longitude and latitude:
flesh and geography
dissolving on your tongue.

KIRUN KAPUR

Light

The suffering and grief of Partition are not memorialized at the border, nor publically, elsewhere, in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Millions may have died, but they have no monument. Stories are all that people have, stories that rarely breach the frontiers of family and religious community: people talking to their own blood.

—Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence*

The only aunt I know would tell me,
This is how you knead the dough.
I don't remember the old stories—
Make sure it doesn't get too tough!

Knead carefully to make the atta.
Good girls know how to make good puris.
Make sure the gluten doesn't toughen,
A puri should be light and golden.

Good girls know how to make good puris.
They don't ask for the old stories.
A puri should be light and golden,
Like your cousin's and your cousin's cousin's.

I overheard the stories
When all the women shared a bed.
My cousins and my cousin's cousins—
The older women slept still dressed in saris.

When all the women shared a bed
The fan chuffed through a cloud of talcum powder.
Still fully dressed in saris,
They whispered names I'd never heard before.

When the fan chuffed sandalwood and roses,
I raised my arm above my head.
They named lost aunts and daughters.
I caught hold of my cousin's hand.

I raised my arm up in the dark.
There was a niece who could have been recovered.
I held my favorite cousin's hand.
Her name meant *light*, like mine does.

There was one niece who could have been recovered.
My grandfather had her traced.
Her name meant *light*, as mine does.
I've tried not to imagine her face.

Somehow my grandfather found her,
But her brothers refused to take her back.
I imagine the row of our faces,
Women in bed in the dark.

Her brothers refused to reclaim her.
This was after the riots and trains.
In bed, in the dark they could say it:
This is what broke us apart.

After the riot of years,
How should we remember the old stories?
What will break and what will toughen—
The only aunt I know will tell me.

KIRUN KAPUR

I Ask My Mother How It Happened

It's noon. She takes the blue box from the pantry shelf and sits a cookie on the table. Chips Ahoy. Brown circle decked with darker flecks of brown. I can smell the chocolate, imagine the taste, while outside black and yellow mynas fight in the plumeria tree. *Do you want it? Would you like a taste?* I'm about to reach for it when she smiles, studying me: *That's how it happens.* The sun pours in, the birds are taking their grievances from tree to tree and the sweet, dark smell intensifies. Her eyes are chocolaty, so I know it's safe to ask, *Because of cookies?* She laughs and what I want more than the whole box is to make her do it again. *Because of desire. It's all our wanting that makes the world so sad.* I rub my sandals on the chair leg, fidget in my seat. This seems important. I'm thinking Chips Ahoy taste too dry, anyway. She stands, moving to put the box away. *In the convent, we prayed that Christ would live in our hearts, driving all other desires away.* I study the arch of her narrow back as she tidies the cupboard. She's wearing a green dress that I know she doesn't like. *It's only a cookie,* I say, but I know how I'd feel if someone took what I want most away. *It's o.k. You can eat it,* she says. The lesson is over. The birds have gone. Only the sun is left slicing the room with its clean, bright sword. *Eat it,* she urges, but even hours later, when I creep downstairs to say goodnight, the sweetness sits untouched on the empty tabletop.

KIRUN KAPUR

From the Afterlife

I wanted to be a bone—white like
the Taj Mahal, hard as a puritan—

when vein and wish are stripped,
still able to rattle the essential notes.

But no music gets made when you pit
your self against ideas of yourself.

Dust suits me better. Grey-brown fleck—
I can mix, move into the smallest space,

spark the grittiest tunes. Divide me
into fifty states: winsome, wondering, crazed, my face

scattered by teaspoon. Over the Great Basin
of played out mines and salts rising in a haze,

over hard farmed heartland, the bent
fair-headed wheat, the combine's cloud,

silt along the fat lip of river bed. Semis
hissing and grumbling in tongues.

I can still feel the hum of the telephone wires,
running from one life to another. I filled these lines

in case a story is a body, in case we lose our place.
Hello? Friend? I can touch everything,

but can't stop thinking. Turns out, thoughts
granulate. Turns out, I never was a girl, I was all

those girls, a girl statue, torch raised, you know the one—
standing in the harbor, wearing a sari.

The tide foams up. Now, I'm so much dust,
I am a continent, absorbing—a thimble full

of mother, angry powder, laughing specks, froth,
filth, lover, crying cinders, particles of mineral wind.

I'm proof that nothing is lost.
You can breathe me in.

KIRUN KAPUR

For the Survivors

Begin with a seed. Begin with the father and the mother, your first Adam and Eve. Begin with what falls from the tree: you can live on bruised and sweet. Begin with a monsoon breeze, begin with a flood, begin with miles of silk and mud and the wings of cranes and the stilt-like legs of a house with no one left inside, with a young wife burying her sons and books riding the tide until they're caught and their philosophies dried out on laundry lines. Begin with a pen, begin with a cage. Begin with the memory of what they said while you tried to turn your face away. Begin with bargains, with stains, the names of towns built over towns built over graves, begin with your life burned down. With the god who hasn't been seen since the burning bush and the goddess who steps into the flames like a housewife into a dress, or a fairy tale of hair so long that love climbed up—begin by putting your mouth to the mouth of your dreams. Begin with tendons, teeth. Begin with what never goes away: a highway pricked by gravel and stars, low beams on wind and trucks and emptiness. Begin. It starts with being, ends like a ringing bell: Begin. Begin. Ring your self.

Notes

Light: It is estimated that somewhere between 75,000 and 100,000 women were abducted during Partition. In September of 1947, both the Indian and Pakistani governments agreed to attempt to "recover" abducted persons and reunite them with their original families. India's official *Abducted Persons (Restoration and Recovery) Act* was signed in 1949. Some scholars estimate that ten percent of abducted women were located through this program. The program, however, was fraught with problems. Forced marriages, sexual violence and the resulting birth of children confounded both laws and loyalties. In some cases, the women's original families would not accept them back. In other cases, women didn't want to return to their original families, but their wishes were not taken into account and many were forcibly repatriated.

Book Reviews

Mothering and Psychoanalysis:
Clinical, Sociological and Feminist Perspectives

Petra Bueskens, ed.
Bradford, Ontario: Demeter Press, 2014.

REVIEWED BY HELENA VISSING

I received this ambitious book with eager anticipation and admittedly, high expectations. As a psychoanalytically informed reader interested in maternal studies, I am constantly searching for psychoanalytic studies of mothering. This book confirms that motherhood and mothering are topics that cannot be fully examined exclusively within one discipline. The book "brings together the different disciplinary strands of psychoanalysis, sociology and feminism to consider motherhood and mothering," as editor Petra Bueskens begins her introduction (1). Bueskens is a Lecturer in Social Sciences at the Australian College of Applied Psychology and a psychotherapist in private practice. Having a foot in both an academic world and in clinical psychotherapy serves Bueskens well in her ambitious project as editor of this volume. The classic intersection between psychoanalysis and feminism with the question of the maternal as the triangulating point is intriguing and challenging. In addition to this, the book aims to add the ongoing debates of the psychological vs. the sociological in relation to this intersection. In twenty-three chapters, the contributors present analyses, research data, clinical case studies

and original theory. Among contributors are notable names many readers will be familiar with, for example Nancy Chodorow, Lynne Layton, Alison Stone, and Lisa Baraitser.

The majority of the introduction is a literature review of the overlapping areas of psychoanalysis, feminism, and the question of the maternal. It serves as an excellent overview of the central issues of maternal studies (and could easily be used as core curriculum for any graduate level class). However, although Bueskens encourages readers familiar with this to skip to the chapter summaries, the length and density of the literature made me wish for a separate and perhaps even longer chapter for this overview. Readers might not enjoy choosing to start the reading experience with either skipping or risk getting stuck in a quite intense and concentrated overview of more than a century's worth of philosophy, psychology, and feminist theory related to the topic.

Following the introduction, the book is divided into five sections: "The Therapist as Mother," "The Mother in Therapy," "Mothers in Art and Culture," "Mothers in Theory and Practice," and "Mothering, Therapy Culture and the Social." The first section seeks to shed light on the "feminization of therapy," and the reciprocal impact of mothering on therapy and therapy on mothering. Sections two through four explore psychoanalytic theories of maternal subjectivity through artistic analyses, theoretical discussions and research. The last section returns to the question of the social and the way feminism influences therapy culture in relation to the maternal. Although the chapters in the middle sections can easily be read independently, I found that the last section is best understood after reading the first section. The last section continues the discussion of how motherhood and therapy are related. Furthermore, some chapters are challenging and require more than basic familiarity with feminism and psychoanalysis, for example Baraitser's chapter on Maternal Publics. Fortunately, a great introduction to Baraitser is offered in Julie Rodger's chapter on Baraitser's book *Maternal Encounters*.

The most significant strength of this book is the effective execution of a solid interdisciplinary approach, in several ways: the dialogues between theory and clinical practice, the psychological and the sociological, psychoanalysis and feminism, all in light of the maternal as the impossible question. Although not all of the chapters are technically interdisciplinary, all the mentioned perspectives and paradigms are brought into play both within chapters and in the way the chapters work together in the sections. Bueskens does a remarkable job of weaving the myriad of arguments and ideas together and maintaining the focus, especially in her own three chapter contributions (in Section I, an interview with Ilene Philipson and the chapter "Is Therapy a form of Paid Mothering?" and in Section V, the chapter "Beyond the Para-

digm Way: Good Psychotherapy is Sociological"). Bueskens insists on bringing in sociological perspectives to inform and challenge psychological and psychoanalytic vantage points while maintaining authentic appreciation of clinical work and psychoanalytic theory. It is the tireless unfolding of disciplines with the maternal as the constant focal point that makes this volume a valuable text for scholars, clinicians, theorists and researchers alike. My high expectations were indubitably met.

Love, Loss and Longing: Stories of Adoption

Carol Bowyer Shipley.
Winnipeg, Man: McNally Robinson Booksellers, 2013.

REVIEWED BY PAT BRETON

A birth mother's grief when giving up a child for adoption, identity loss for adoptees disconnected from birth parents in closed adoption registries, and the joy of new parent/ child relationships in adoptive families are just some of the heart-tugging stories that Carol Bowyer Shipley shares in *Love, Loss and Longing: Stories of Adoption.* Her study of domestic and international adoption in Canada is located within an adopted child's rights framework, attachment theories, and critiques of legal reforms in Canada's adoption laws. Here, her research traces the liberalization of Canadian adoption beginning in the 1970s where many adoption processes and adoptees' search for birth families benefited from laws allowing for active searches of birth parents. With the passing of Bill 183 in 2009, the author is critical of how the disclosure rights of those who do not want their identities released trump the human rights of Canadian adoptees and birth parents to know and be known to each other. One of Shipley's strongest convictions is the "belief that the right of adopted persons to know the identity of their birth parents surpasses in importance all other adoption issues" (267).

Shipley's passion for transparency in adoption processes is perhaps best reflected in the first section of the book where she writes about her own personal struggles for "completeness" as an adopted child in Manitoba. She recounts how she lived with "disenfranchised grief" and depression for many years until, as a fifty-two-year-old adult and adoptive mother with her own family, she finally reunited with her birth mother and Ukrainian birth family.

In the second half of the book, Shipley brings sensitivity, care and compassion to the complexities of adoption, as an adoption practitioner. Her research identifies the challenges of domestic and international adoptions encountered by adoptees, adoptive families, and birth parents in the private adoption circle. Ten narratives of birth mothers and adoptive families offer insights into how inequalities of race, class, gender, and sexuality shape adoption decisions and practices in Canada. For example, low-income teen mothers and mothers with addictions who gave up their children for adoption relate their stories of mistreatment and abuse by medical staff, support systems and family members during their pregnancies and deliveries. To help birth mothers heal from the stigma of the "bad, unfit mom who abandons her child through adoption," Shipley's adoption practice offers birthday celebrations to honour birth mothers. Another narrative tells the story of a low-income immigrant family who due to financial constraints, considers, but decides against, giving up their baby for adoption. The inclusion of contrasting adoption narratives of white, middle-class, heterosexual families with the financial means to adopt and raise a family provides an opportunity, which Shipley does not take, to reflect on how the "suitability" of adoptive parents is embedded within the westernized politics of race and class. Shipley however is critical of the long history of discrimination against LGBTQ parents in adoption, noting that private and public adoption practices over the last ten years have increasingly included LGBTQ families.

These adoption narratives of love, loss, and connection for adoptees and adoptive families barely scratch the surface of Canadian adoption. More attention to critiques of adoption within Canada's colonial history of Eurocentric, white settler policies can shed important light on the state's central involvement in the disruption and disintegration of families, particularly poor, racialized, First Nations and single mother families. The disproportionate numbers of children from these marginalized families, who predominate and languish in Canada's child welfare and adoption systems, are testimony to this social injustice. Also absent are histories of the global politics of international adoption. Here, an analysis of global capitalism and transnational families can reveal how the inequalities of race, gender, class and nation are reproduced in international adoptions where "first world" private adoption agencies and adoptive families benefit from the commodification of family poverty and girlhood/childhood disadvantage when adopting "third world" children.

From the many perspectives of author Carol Bower Shipley as mother, adoptee, adoptive parent, academic researcher, and adoption practitioner, this book is a deeply personal and engaging read where happy endings, often elusive, are complicated by the grief, love, and losses associated with adoption.

This contribution to Canadian adoption literature highlights a history of adoption practices fraught with legal and personal struggles of identity and (be)longing.

Projection: Encounters with My Runaway Mother

Priscila Uppal
Toronto: Dundurn, 2013.

REVIEWED BY CAYO GAMBER

In her memoir, *Projection: Encounters with My Runaway Mother*, Priscila Uppal interrogates the autobiographical stories we are willing to tell others, and, ultimately, the personal stories we are willing to tell ourselves. From the outset, Uppal informs her readers that she "hated being the girl in school without a mother," and that whenever possible, she wanted to ensure that no one should know that she "had a 'runaway mother': a mother who had abandoned her family without a trace." At the age of 37, Uppal's father drank contaminated water and became a quadriplegic. For almost six years, Uppal's mother "cared" for her husband and two small children. Uppal recalls her mother's violent rages – including when her mother threw her down the stairs along with her typewriter because Priscila had touched the typewriter without permission. She also remembers her mother shoving the tubing from her father's urine bag down his throat. And then, when her brother Amjit was nine and Priscila was eight, her mother, Theresa, bought three tickets for Brazil. When the two children refused to go with her, Theresa left for Brazil on her own. Twenty years later, by accident, while running a web search for reviews of her work, Uppal runs across her mother's website.

Given the evidence of her mother's terrible rage against and subsequent abandonment of her family, I want to sympathize with Uppal; however, I find that I am conflicted in my response to this memoir because I do not fully understand her motivation in writing this narrative.

The memoir focuses on Uppal's twelve-day visit with her mother. She informs us that "[e]ver since I was eighteen and had started writing seriously at university, I entertained the idea of embarking on a trip to find my runaway mother, and to write a book about the journey." From the start, then, her journey, in large part, is about crafting a narrative of their encounter. In the last third of the text, she claims she is

willing to endure her [mother] for a book for all the other children of disastrous, neglectful, and narcissistic parents…., for those out there who reunite with lost mothers and fathers, dreams of reconciliation packed tenderly in their carry-ons, who land to the horrific discovery that they were better off without these parents, because the disappointing truth is that family reunions do not necessarily end in "newfound understanding, acceptance, and love."

However, it isn't fully clear how reading about this failed reunion will benefit her readers.

Uppal pairs each chapter with a movie – a movie that becomes a place of projection for her, for her mother, or for both. What becomes clear, in the course of the memoir, is that what Uppal characterizes as the Freaky Friday genre will never come to characterize her relationship with her mother. She explains that in this genre, a young person and a mature adult temporarily switch bodies, and "once the body order is restored, satisfaction lies in the knowledge that parent and child have gained an understanding of each other's worlds. Father and son, mother and daughter, now love out of compassion rather than merely blood." Conversely, Uppal discovers that "the woman who exists today is just as hateful, if not more so, than the woman of the past. And she could still not care less about me, or my brother, or my father for that matter…." Her mother's narcissism is such that Priscila observes that her mother "has not asked her estranged daughter more than two or three questions about her own life in five days of conversations," that this "woman has no interest in any story other than the one she's constructed."

However, Uppal also could be read as narcissistic. Throughout the memoir, she reminds us of her many accomplishments. For example, at one point, Priscila Uppal is taken aback when her "mother lists her accomplishments as a journalist (she is a 'very famous journalist,' an educator 'of the highest order,' with 'well-respected friends')." She adds that she is "horrified by the tirade of conceit." Yet, she wonders if her mother thinks "I am just as successful, completing a Ph.D. in literature, having already landed a tenure-stream professorship at the third-largest Canadian university, two published books of poetry plus a novel."

In addition, Uppal frequently notes that her mother is physically "repulsive," "a fat woman"; "overweight … in her loud formless clothes and bright red lipstick"; "her tacky clothing and bulky frame," with "her frizzy hair, her bloated face, her clashing clothes and shuffling body." However, these observations about her mother are not borne out in the photographs that accompany the memoir. At the end of her visit and her memoir, Priscila Uppal concludes: "I don't need a mother. And I no longer desire one. This doesn't

need to be a tragedy." I want to applaud this ending, but I remain perplexed by this memoir because, ultimately, the story Uppal is willing to tell herself and her reader does not seem particulary incisive or successfully self-reflexive.

Fertile Ground: Exploring Reproduction in Canada

Paterson, Stephanie, Francesca Scala, and Marlene K. Sokolon.
Montreal: McGill-Queen University Press, 2014.

REVIEWED BY JEN RINALDI

In *Fertile Ground: Exploring Reproduction in Canada*, editors Stephanie Paterson, Francesca Scala, and Marlene K. Sokolon have collected works on the law, policy, and social infrastructure implicated in the regulation of Canadian reproductive activities. Built into the foundation of the collection is a challenge to the discursive shaping of reproductive activities within neo-liberal frameworks. While neo-liberal politics have made possible achievements like the striking down of prohibitive abortion laws or the provision of assistive reproductive technologies, the editors caution in their introduction: "with its emphasis on choice, rights, and responsibilities, neo-liberal discourse…[obscures] the discursive and structural contexts in which choices are made and responsibilities are assigned, negated, or performed" (14).

The chapters compiled under Part One collectively trouble the impossible neoliberal subject upon which reproduction regulations are predicated, by grounding the impact of these regulations in women's experiences. Diana L. Gustafson and Marilyn Porter, and Candace Johnson contribute chapters that concentrate on the carrying out of reproductive decisions within intersectional, generational, and transversal contexts, suggesting that decision-making is inevitably and inextricably a socially embedded, politically informed activity. Co-editor Scala and Michelle Walks both write about the impact of reproductive technologies on queer and trans persons and single women, and the problems inherent in regulatory law and policy built on the assumption that families are heteronormative.

Part Two offers a more intensive focus on statutory and jurisprudential approaches to managing reproduction, beginning with Vanessa Gruben and Angela Cameron, and later Alana Cattapan reflecting upon the 2004 *Assisted*

Human Reproduction Act—legislation that filled a federal void but remains limited, especially since it was stripped down in the 2010 Supreme Court of Canada decision *Reference re Assisted Human Reproduction Act*. This section in *Fertile Ground* also includes Julia Thomson-Philbrook's analysis of the watershed 1988 case *R v Morgentaler*; she claims, "while many believe the *Morgentaler* decision established a constitutional right to choose abortion, that belief is simply not true" (246), given that the decision struck down existing abortion prohibitions in order to protect physicians, without filling the resultant statutory gap with protections guaranteed to those making reproductive decisions.

In the final section, authors consider the discursive construction of reproductive activities. Lisa Smith writes on the appropriation of "girl power" and "at-risk" rhetoric to market birth control as a means of taking control of and responsibility for unruly feminine bodies: "the discourses that construct young women as powerful and autonomous, such as girl power, and the discourses that construct young women as powerless, problematic, and dependent, reflect the complex positioning of young women as subjects in late modern society" (267). Tasnim Nathoo and Aleck Ostry review the federal government's engagement with breastfeeding promotion through the twentieth century, which placed emphasis on social benefits rather than women's experiences; and Robyn Lee suggests that "queering breastfeeding creates new possibilities for pleasure by demonstrating how the boundaries between sexuality and motherhood are necessarily porous" (315). The book ends with Sarah Marie Wiebe and Erin Marie Konsmo, who argue that reproductive justice, which "links issues of health and reproduction to the broader context of social justice" (351), should integrate Aboriginal and environmental politics.

The range of topics covered in *Fertile Ground* is vast, from in vitro fertilization to abortion to breastfeeding. The book thereby catches in its ambit, among others, young women avoiding pregnancy, genderqueer couples engaging in family planning, pregnant women turning toward midwifery, and new lactating mothers. While such a scope is already ambitious, the authors bring loftier, more abstract analyses of legal and social mechanisms to ground by concentrating on the personal and experiential, and demonstrating sensitivity to compounding identity markers such as sexual orientation and gender presentation, and Aboriginal and immigrant status. To weave the work together, all these considerations (joining a chorus of scholars, such as Karpin, 2005; Mykitiuk, 2002; Shildrick, 2004) complicate and call into question the subject assumed to exist across the spectrum of reproductive decisions. This is the impossible subject at the heart of neo-liberal discourse—that disembodied Rawlsian ideal capable of operating outside social, political, and legal

entanglements, borne out of a political economy that prioritizes competition and employs a cult of individuality to mask systemic privilege.

This central focus in the anthology is a powerful one—that notwithstanding strides made in the Canadian arena, the underlying ideological assumptions still at the core of these strides code reproductive choices as decontextualized, their choosers disembodied. Alternative suggestions to neo-liberal rubrics depend upon the theoretical orientation of each anthology author: early on in the text there is a strong showing for relational autonomy, a feminist reclaiming of the principle of autonomy that sheds the baggage of rugged individualism and situates choices in-relation (found also in Sherwin, 1998); but the book ends on reproductive justice (a concept found in Smith, 2005), which not only implicates but also prioritizes the social and political framing of reproductive decisions. That multiple alternatives exist, though, does not undermine the message of the work, for *Fertile Ground* offers a poly-vocal approach to analysis of reproduction in Canada, one that is calibrated and sensitive to the nuances of social location.

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Mothering in East Communities: Politics and Practices

Patti Duncan and Gina Wong, eds.
Bradford, ON: Demeter Press, 2014

REVIEWED BY KATE WILLIAMS

Mothering in East Asian Communities: Politics and Practices brings together a diverse group of authors who work within varying academic and creative mediums to explore the past and present politics and practices of East Asian mothering in America and Canada. The collection complements the previously released Demeter Press book *South Asian Mothering: Negotiating Culture, Family and Selfhood* (2013), edited by Jasjit K. Sangha and Tahira Gonsalves, and continues the conversation that the previous editors began about the complexities and challenges specific to Asian mothering. The editors of *Mothering in East Asian Communities* recognize the problematic inclusiveness of the term "East Asian," and write that by using the term "East Asian," they "hope to make explicit both the specificities of East Asian women's experiences of mothering and motherhood, and the significant relationships our communities have with other communities of color" (3). The editors approach the concept of East Asian mothering through the theoretical frameworks of motherhood studies, feminism, and the epistemological frameworks of East Asian communities, which the editors claim "recognize the value of lived experience and frequently rely on standpoint theory … which recognizes that our perspectives are shaped by our social locations" (7).

The three sections of this collection are structured so that readers are introduced to East Asian mothering first through the historical lens of violence, racism, and colonialism through both critical and creative works before exploring challenges and controversies specific to East Asian mothers and mothering. The final section details the social action being taken by East Asian mothers, community activists, and community leaders.

"Remembering/Historicizing" historicizes East Asian mothering as it has been created and transformed by colonialism including the U.S. involvement in the Korean conflict. The section is comprised of personal narratives as well as researched articles to explore areas such as transnational adoption in Korea and the oppressive forces of U.S. militarism on the lives of Korean women who served members of the U.S military through militarized prostitution and were thereby stigmatized within their communities and families. In addition, this section considers the westernized standards that Korean and Japanese rural women were forcibly placed into during times of colonialism,

and concludes with three creative pieces that look at motherhood from the adult child's perspective in poems and prose, suggesting grief, mourning, and a resistance to the oppressive forces that shaped East Asian mothers during times of occupation and colonialism.

"Negotiating Constructions of (East Asian) Motherhood," "engage[s] specific discourses, debates, and areas of contestation" within East Asian mothering communities (18). The first two chapters address East Asian mothers' responses to Amy Chua's controversial, but popular, memoir *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mom*, especially as the memoir creates the myth of a model minority. In addition, the section includes chapters written by authors who have performed survey research and ethnographic research to focus on the child's perspective of mothering as well as the "goodness" that East Asian mothers have to negotiate when raising gay sons. The last two chapters explore the challenge of entrepreneurship among East Asian mothers and transnational adoption through the perspective and lens of Korean birth mothers.

"East Asian Mothers Moving Toward Social Justice" focuses on the work being done by East Asian mothers, activists, and community leaders for social justice and change in East Asian mothering communities. The first two chapters look at specific case examples involving reproductive and social justice for marginalized mothers and migrant workers. The next chapter explores four East Asian mothers' experiences raising mixed-race sons in the U.S. The following chapter is an exploration of the prison system and the complications that East Asian mothers face in prison and upon reentry into society. The final chapter explores Chua's Tiger Mom in relation to the contemporary western mother figures of the Femivore and the Radical Homemaker to argue that "mothering becomes a racialized site for competing narratives of sustainability" (279).

Mothering in East Asian Communities: Politics and Practices is an important book for the fields of Motherhood Studies, Asian Studies, and Women's Studies, and should be read by anyone concerned with issues of gender, class, race, and social justice as they relate to the historical contexts that have created and magnified these issues for East Asian mothers and mothering practices. The editors bring together a varied group of authors who explore these issues through narrative, poetry, and academic research and analysis to deliver a heterogeneous perspective on what it means to be, and to be raised by, an East Asian mother in America and Canada.

Incarcerated Mothers: Oppression and Resistance

Eds. Gordana Eljdupovic and Rebecca Jaremko Bromwich.
Bradford, ON: Demeter Press, 2013.

REVIEWED BY JOANNE MINAKER

Most women in the world's prisons are mothers. Mothering is a context of incarcerated women's lives, so understanding women *as prisoners* and *as mothers* allows for a nuanced analysis of motherhood and criminalization. When physically separated from their children through incarceration a mother's "mothering contexts" become no less real. This spatial and symbolic divide makes mothering fraught with challenges and uncertainty for both mother and child(ren). *Incarcerated Mothers: Oppression and Resistance,* edited by Gordana Eljdupovic and Rebecca Jaremko Bromwich, is a collection devoted to the "lives, needs and rights of women who are, or have been, incarcerated" (1).

Incarcerated mothers break from dominant constructions of crime and motherhood. The cultural construct of motherhood as nurturance, support, and care contrasts the masculinist structure/culture of dominance within prisons. Challenging the myth of criminalized women as "bad mothers," Eljdupovic and Bromwich, along with twenty-five contributors, aim to treat incarcerated mothers with dignity, focusing on all mothers' need for "support, respect, autonomy and empowerment." *Incarcerated Mothers* situates mothering by women who end up incarcerated in the context of their lives at the margins. The authors bring a central claim of contemporary feminist criminology to motherhood studies; that is, women in prison betray their gender when they break the law and go against social cultural scripts for women.

The collection is timely and relevant. Women are the fastest growing prison population and, Canada is mirroring global trends with legislative agendas prioritize massive incarceration over investments in social services. Women who simultaneously occupy parent and prisoner status face a myriad of obstacles, not the least of which is the barrier criminalization presents for maintaining or transforming relationships with children. The book begins and ends with work by incarcerated women themselves, framing an academic analysis with self-expressions from women in prison – first in photography and lastly with poetry (21). The first page is a photograph of three-year-old Amber Joy embracing her mother, Patricia Block. Block writes: "The day at the hospital when I had to kiss my baby goodbye was the most helpless, miserable, and empty experience of my life. I often asked why was she be-

ing punished for something I did?" This emotive starting point underscores an invisible relationship—the hidden impact of a mother's incarceration on her child(ren). Eljdupovic and Bromwich state that incarcerated mothers are "doubly stigmatized" or "double odd"—they are in jail, like men, *and* they are *not* (as social expectations dictate) providing daily care to their children (1).

The book is structured in two sections: 1) Incarcerated Mothers in Context: Social Systems and Inequality, and 2) Lived Experiences of Incarcerated Mothers. Section One includes contexts like child protection/child welfare (e.g. used to detain adolescent mothers) and covers social, cultural and political contexts (i.e. implications associated with incarcerating Aboriginal mothers in Canada, and how patriarchal colonization continues for Indigenous Australian mothers. The common thread is underlying marginalization that keeps racialized and economically disadvantaged mothers locked away, making prison their "home." The feminization of poverty, abuse, lack of educational opportunities or life sustaining employment, power imbalances, among other issues that women-quo-women disproportionately confront dramatically impact women caught up in processes of criminalization.

Part Two includes the story of the mother-child program in a B.C. women's prison and an analysis of the impact of social and criminal justice policies on mothering and relationships. This section highlights the lack of supportive environments and social structures that characterize (incarcerated) women's lives but also a politics of resistance, hope and resiliency. Living conditions they face and inadequate social supports make criminalization a pathway more likely for single mothers, women of colour, and women at the economic margins.

From care and respect in multigenerational prisons in Portugal to the plight of incarcerated mothers in India, *Incarcerated Mothers* covers much ground and delivers on its aim to attend to "the marginality, poverty, abuse, and other systemic inequalities in social contexts experienced by incarcerated mothers" (23). The editors state: "Marginalized and unsupported circumstances only deepen and intensify upon incarceration, when women 're-enter' the 'society,' or more precisely, when they re-enter, the criminogenic margins of society they lived in prior to incarceration" (22). The book is essential reading for those whose life or work intersects with incarcerated mothers and/or children with incarcerated parents. I commend the authors' attempts to unite two important conversations about motherhood and criminalization. Feminist criminology has long called out the contradictions and the systemic issues that exacerbate women's troubles. If women leaving prison are to become integrated within their communities, they need social inclusion, which involves stable housing, quality childcare, health care, and education and employment opportunities.

Rich in description and breadth of content, *Incarcerated Mothers* has room to deepen the analytical scope. Problematizing the tensions between oppression and resistance (and better clarifying the concepts) would allow for more about "what is done to mothers in and by these systems" and "the agency of the mothers themselves, their resistance and values that are of high importance to them" (11). Eljdupovic and Bromwich extend Andrea O'Reilly's idea of "Mother Outlaw" as a way to "bridge the gap" between incarcerated and many other mothers (21). There is room left to explore a link between empowered mothers as "ideological outlaws" and incarcerated mothers as "legal outlaws."

Constrained choices are found in all mothering contexts but are particularly salient for incarcerated mothers whose decisions about how they mother and meet their child(ren)'s needs are inextricably bound in the social spaces in which their lives are embedded, structured by race, gender, class and other inequalities. Shame of letting others down may be shared among mothers, yet a freedom *some* of us find in letting go of the cultural myth of the "perfect good mother" by embracing a maternal role on our own terms, as "outlaw," may be less likely for incarcerated moms, ironically. Eljdupovic and Bromwich argue: "when women from the margins do mother, they place value on themselves and on children that the society in which they live has deemed unworthy of investment" (6). Stories about "Other" mothers challenging mainstream discourse on parenting and gender justice may help to shift the social devaluation of incarcerated mothers and their children. In response to women's oppression a new paradigm where we support amelioration through stable and caring communities for all mothers and children over criminalization holds promise for social justice.

Reproducing the British Caribbean: Sex, Gender and Population Politics After Slavery

Juanita De Barros.
Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 2014.

REVIEWED BY RACHEL O'DONNELL

Juanita De Barros' new text on the politics of reproduction in the Caribbean's post-slavery period, *Reproducing the British Caribbean: Sex, Gender, and Population Politics after Slavery,* traces the gendered and racialized policies that resulted from ideas surrounding population, reproduction and individuals in

the Caribbean after the end of slavery in the region. De Barros situates her discussion within three British colonies (Jamaica, Guyana, and Barbados) and two historical moments: the end of slavery in the region (1834/1838) and the violent labor protests (1934-1938) that led to nationalist movements for independence. She draws a number of noteworthy conclusions about slavery and its emancipation as well as reproduction and population growth, elaborating on the racialized underpinnings of colonial policy surrounding sexual and domestic practices in the Caribbean and the Eurocentric assumptions that informed these policies. Ideas about race and racialized views of population, health, and reproduction take center stage in her research in surprising ways, from policies surrounding infant and maternal welfare to tropical medicine, among others.

New attitudes emerged after slavery ended in the Caribbean, and as De Barros argues, many of these were invested in the success of emancipation itself. These new ways of thinking about medicine and society were crucial to policy development surrounding health and reproduction. De Barros considers the involvement of local physicians and researchers in tropical medicine, local midwives and the training programs provided for them, as well as the local mothers who were the targets of this official concern. She argues that individuals helped to shape approaches and implement policies to ensure the reproduction of Caribbean populations in the decades before independence. She demonstrates the centrality of sex, marriage, and women's reproductive labor during the colonial period and links these concepts to the emergence of new social orders after slavery, indicating how colonial anxieties surrounding sexuality continued to unfold in post-slavery societies.

These colonial anxieties figure prominently in the extensive research De Barros presents in five chapters, each of which focuses around a central element of her argument. She draws clear connections between falling birthrates, infant mortality, and population 'degeneration'; between health and national wealth; between eugenics and the ways in which the impoverished of the region were blamed for these problems, poor women in particular being condemned as unqualified mothers who contributed to their own children's mortality. De Barros reminds us that reproduction remained a measure of emancipation's success. Indeed, racial fitness was a powerful tool of empire, and the story De Barros writes of the ways colonial powers maintained 'fit' colonial peoples to labor in plantations and mines, and produce healthy and reproductive offspring is a captivating one. She does well to include the many ways in which birth practices changed in this time period, together with movements to eliminate traditional midwives for their 'unsanitary' traditional birth practices, and other ways that non-whites were represented as 'primitive' in sexuality and in the domestic sphere, including in childbirth itself. Most

interestingly, she details the role individual white British women played in this process highlighting tensions around 'hygienic' methods of child rearing. Indeed, policies that were seemingly innocuous, such as new methods for counting and keeping track of births and deaths, served the colonial governments in a multitude of ways.

De Barros presents a timely study of Caribbean reproductive policies, as well as the legacies of race, gender and colonialism as they continue to affect ideas and policies in the region as a whole, engaging intimately with ideas about sexuality and population growth and tropical disease. By placing reproduction centrally in her work, De Barros's new book makes a welcome contribution to the literature on post-slavery societies, nicely situating her gendered historiography within Caribbean Studies and work on the African diaspora. This text will be of urgent importance to the fields of Caribbean history and sociology, as well as mothering and motherhood in a global context.

Wood

Jennica Harper.
Vancouver: Anvil Press, 2013.

REVIEWED BY DORSÍA SMITH SILVA

In *Wood*, Jennica Harper contemplates the multiple meanings of "wood" by revealing the complex layers of parent-child relationships in the stories of imaginary children, surrogate caregivers, fictitious father figures, and disillusioned progeny. Divided into six sections, the volume articulates the stories of wooden objects, wooden people, and wooden situations. While the connections between some of the poems are tenuous, the volume succeeds in Harper's skill to manipulate the definitions of wood and conjure new understandings of parenthood.

The first section titled, "Realboys: Poems for, and from, Pinocchio," is told from the prospective of the wooden childlike puppet Pinocchio who was made by the woodcarver Gepetto. As in the childhood tale, Pinocchio wants to become a real boy, attend school, and please his father-figure and creator Gepetto. Yet, his inability to become human causes great distress in "Where It Goes": "But I have no blood to offer. No cells, / no jellyseeds

racing through / veins I do not have." Likewise, Pinocchio feels a sense of deep sadness that he cannot be a "realboy" that ripens into manhood in "Ms. Blue": "Sweet child wants so badly / to be a man. How hard it was / to tell him he'll always be / a sapling. Puppets / don't grow." The concluding poem in this section, "Every Good Boy," plays with the juxtaposition of Pinocchio coming from "good wood," but not being "good" since he tells lies.

Harper shifts the perspective to a young female caretaker of a disabled child in the second section, "Liner Notes." As the speaker listens to "Crimson and Clover" by Tommy James and the Shondells, she links numerous details from her life, the young child's life, and the history of the song and singers. These connections represent her interpretations of "wooden" relationships: a failing relationship with her boyfriend, the abrupt disbanding of Tommy James and the Shondells, and the child's weary parents that argue "in the kitchen like dishwashers / going through their cycles" and "shout the shouts / of the very tired." On other hand, the child represents the possibility of "would": a trajectory full of infinite outcomes, since her life is in the beginning stages of development. By the end of the poem, the speaker parallels her uncertainty of her future role in society with the dubious meaning of "Crimson and Clover": "There are various interpretations of the meaning of 'Crimson and Clover' / … Many continue to believe it's simply about being high, floating, synesthesia, / letting go."

Building upon the father-son dynamic in section one, the father figure is reconfigured as various iconic Hollywood movie stars in section three. Harper deftly brings into the imaginary pop culture references when the speaker's father adopts the personas of Jack Nicholson, Robert Redford, Kevin Costner, Roman Polanski, Peter Falk, and Steve McQueen. Yet, these poems appear to threaten to disrupt the overall congruity of the volume and should have been placed after section one to continue the exploration on fathers.

Harper focuses on poems about Erik Weisz (Harry Houdini) and his wife in the fourth section, "The Box." In particular, she explores their childless marriage and imaginary children. Poems such as "Dream Child," "Dream #2," and "Dream Child #3" envision the personalities of three different children. "Wife" intensifies the emotional toil between the childless couple, especially when Houdini as the speaker/poet states, "You want her to want / those children. Then she'd be missing something, like you." As in the previous sections, the couple's vacillation between emotional connection and disconnection represent "wooden" relationships and the wood/would possibilities.

The imaginary and hypothetical realms dominate "Would." This section begins with a poem about Lizzie Borden's parents who are unable to have children. Harper also includes a poem about a miscarriage where the speaker

"imagined" "a quiet loss." Unfortunately, the loss becomes traumatic when "the bleeding won't stop." The section ends with "Ring in the Grain" and chronicles the birth of a child to manhood. By the end of the poem, he wonders about life's infinite possibilities—a position similar to the speaker in "Crimson and Clover."

Harper returns to exploring parent-child relationships and pop culture in the last section. All of the poems are told from the point of view of Sally Draper, the sassy daughter of Don and Betty Draper on the television show *Mad Men*. While she recounts some tales of Sally's coming-of-age, such as watching *Jaws,* having a first kiss, buying red lipstick, and having an abortion, Harper uses some of these poems to also examine social, racial, and familial stratifications. In "Sally Draper: Upwardly Mobile," Sally recalls her mother's enviable position: "At home, my mother had it made and brought to her by the help." Likewise, when Sally has lunch with her former maid Carla in "Sally Draper Takes Carla Out for Lunch," she finds herself criticizing the maid's mannerisms—a habit she inherited from her upper class mother. Sally's father also draws her censure when she buys him the book *The Spy Who Came In From the Cold* and hopes he will "see / the symbolism— / a man wanting / out." The poems in *Wood* distinctly exemplify how connections and disconnections form a series of variations in relationships. They also acknowledge the parent-child dynamic in all its evolving forms, which leave a powerful impact. Most importantly, the volume unveils the lives of sons, daughters, fathers, and mothers, and denotes a new world of experiences of motherhood.

Milk Fever

Lissa M. Cowan.
Bradford, ON: Demeter Press, 2013.

REVIEWED BY SUDY STORM

> The age-old story about the milk revealed a greater truth that science could not easily capture like a bee or butterfly to fix with a pin for study. (151)

Lissa Cowan uses fiction to tell truth. Her novel reminds us that women carry ancient wisdom that has been suppressed for centuries. She weaves her story of oppression and gender inequality in France at the end of the eighteenth century, a time of political unrest when the French Revolution was beginning

to gain momentum. French citizens struggled to survive censorship, taxation, and imprisonment during the reign of King Louis XVI and a gluttonous educated elite.

The story is told through the narratives of a poor young peasant girl, Céleste, about the wet nurse Armande, who has rescued Céleste from an abusive household where she is a servant. When the wet nurse returns to the home she shares with her father, she brings Céleste with her. Unlike other women of the era, Armande has been taught to read and write by her father, a man who believes that women should be educated. She passes her love of literature on to Céleste who she mentors along a path of female empowerment.

As a wet nurse, Armande is both respected and feared. The children who come into her care seem to be healthier and brighter than the other village children. It is believed that a woman's thoughts are passed on to a child through her milk and therefore children who suckle at Armande's breast will be smarter. She becomes an advocate for the education of women as she realizes while nursing her baby that women can read and breastfeed, unlike the commonly held social values of the time that declare women incapable of learning.

The book is filled with accurate herbal remedies for mothers and babies that are still used by midwives today. This ancient knowledge has been devalued as the biomedical model of health care has replaced the wisdom of women. In her search for guidance in dealing with a teething child, Armande consults the *Encyclopedia* only to find it written by "men of scientific methods using scholarly dissertations that are too stupid or inadequate to ever be applied." She consults a book written by a midwife in which cloves are recommended to ease the pain of teething. This binary opposition of male science versus female wisdom is present throughout the book and we see this reflected in our world today where women's wisdom is continually challenged by a belief in empirical evidence.

As the story progresses, Armande is ordered to Paris by the king to nurse his son who is sickly. In an act of defiance she refuses to respond to the summons, which ends in her kidnapping by agents of the king. Armande's defiance of the king and her advocacy of education for women are examples of single acts in a movement for women's rights. Women marching in the streets of Paris in protest of censorship and gender inequality speak to the power of women as a body of protest and leaders in social movements.

Milk Fever is a story of the struggles of women as told through the voice of a young narrator empowered by the mentorship of a brave woman willing to stand up to the powerful in advocacy of the vulnerable. Cowan brings to the forefront the ancient knowledge of the grandmothers, the universal strength of mothers to nourish and nurture, and the power of women to promote so-

cial change in a world of peril. She shows us how motherhood and social activism are related (DiQuinzio) to the discourse of maternalism in the context of patriarchal eighteenth century France. *Milk Fever* represents the timeless nature of our history as mothers and wise women.

Work Cited

DiQuinzio, Patrice. "The Politics of Mothers' Movement in the United States." *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering* 8.1,2 (2006): 55-71.

Birth of the Uncool: Poems

Madeline Walker.
Bradford, ON: Demeter Press, 2014.

REVIEWED BY LAURIE KRUK

Madeline Walker is one "Uncool" Mama … a woman who has articulated her own struggles of maturation—through addiction, loss, divorce, the perils of parenting "different" children—in the form of moving, eloquent and funny poems. Now in her fifties, she urges us, in the title poem of her collection, *Birth of the Uncool,* to embrace aging artfully: "Undress and sit for me, darling, your / beautiful body, strong, aged, puckered, / built to last…. / Who cares if the kids see these / sketches tacked on our huge bulletin boards? / Who gives a shit what anybody / thinks of our uncool abandon?" (105). But before the speaker—arguably closely identified with the writer—arrives at this place of joyful abandon, she takes us through four stages which culminate in the new growth announced in her title section: "Recovery, Youth, Motherhood and Coming Home." The book begins in the darkness of "Shame," "Guilt" and "Hate," with *Recovery,* which confronts addictive behaviors ("recovery programs" are acknowledged by Walker) that make the young woman more vulnerable to insecurity or exploitation, as revealed in *Youth.* It movingly traces the change from innocence to experience in a contemporary urban context, a "Simplicity" pattern nightgown being replaced by dirty "bellbottoms" in "Coming of Age in Toronto." In "Schoolgirl," the poet probes the slow silencing of young women as a continuing part of their socialization. She retrospectively salutes her pre-adolescent self: "Oh knocky- / kneed chatty school girl I / was! I wish I could hug / her now in her then unself- / conscious

uncool glory / because soon it will wither" (29-30).

Motherhood follows, with its familiar struggles and conflicts, especially raising sons who don't fit in. "Cupcake," for instance, muses on the boy who perfects his confection while his peers gleefully devour theirs, and concludes "You shut out the crash of the world and/ rest serene in the/friendly geometry of your mind" (53). But *Coming Home* triumphantly celebrates a satisfying, second, mid-life marriage in poems like "The sex life of a middle-aged woman." The speaker here contrasts Woolf's Clarissa Dalloway's "brittleness" with her own defiance of ageist stereotypes: "Dry egg…/Blood going, going gone. /And yet this erotic river flowers / thick, unbridled" (84). With wry honesty and an accessible style, Walker uncovers the many "traps" of female socialization, coming out the other side in confident middle age. She also varies her free verse with "Around the house: A week of domestic sedokas," in which the mundane is explored for its hidden rhythms and rituals: *Tuesday* / I change the bed sheets / your black sock is revealed there / between crumpled red linen / What good is a sock / without a foot? Or a mate? / I tuck it in your drawer" (67). "Third step, a villanelle" also turns self-help jargon into music with its refrain, "'Turn it over' is the mantra of my days/My mind resists and yet my heart obeys" (23).

Despite this earnest trajectory, however, humour and whimsy abound. In "The Dr. Seuss Challenge," (modeled after the famous metrical verses of the children's author), she rejects "co-dependence," declaring, "The hardest of lessons is to sit on my hands / keep my tongue in my mouth, tend to Madeline lands / Your lands, son, are yours, with your own skies above / I'll keep to my acreage, just sending out love" (15).

Motherhood, of course, is about different degrees of "co-dependence" at different stages, so Madeline's challenge is also likely ours, as children put aside Dr. Seuss in favour of i-pods, cars, and jobs. "My Ariadne," the mythopoetic meditation which opens the book, offers a feminist revision of the story, claiming Ariadne as the writer's guide through life's mazes: "Today we are gliding across/high terrain, wind whips her hair/lovingly, playfully. / Shards of rock / fall in love with her tough and / shapely feet" (4). Writing in the feminist tradition of Cixous's essay, "The Laugh of the Medusa," Walker (re)claims her goddess as an inspiration, ending with "Make the world her labyrinth / and let her breathe love. / Now, *that*'s my Ariadne" (7). Indeed, Demeter Press announces itself as a proud part of this feminist recovery project. Yet it is the mutual support of mates well-matched that creates the redemptive power of the second half of the collection, despite the pain of loss, reflecting the speaker's down-to-earth insight in "A Honeymoon Tale" that "Loss opens/a new page, splits a vein to bleed / from us the past" (74).

Work Cited

Cixous, Helene. "The Laugh of the Medusa." *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Gen. Ed. Vincent B. Leitch. New York: Norton, 2001. 2038-56.

The Music of Leaving: Poems

Tricia McCallum.
Bradford, Ontario: Demeter Press, 2014.

REVIEWED BY ELIZABETH CUMMINS MUÑOZ

In *The Music of Leaving,* Tricia McCallum reminds us: "We are granted a finite amount / of absolutely / everything. / Listen for the unspoken." In this slim collection of poems that explore the tender losses of everyday life, the seasoned poet lays out a lifetime of listening for the unspoken and living in full awareness of the meaning of the moment. Throughout *The Music of Leaving*, McCallum's images and narratives bloom like wildflowers, untamed and fire-struck and destined to fade. Nuns dance alone in the afternoon light of an empty schoolroom, falcons perch fierce with sinew and flesh tucked into their talons, and empty swing sets tell the story of an absence forever present. McCallum's poetic wisdom shines in the transience of these images as she uses the nostalgia of felt remembering to reveal the true meaning of the lives she recounts. In these poems, to remember is to feel what remains of the past—a lover's gesture, a confrontation, an image captured by chance. In the poet's direct, intimate language, the feelings that remain are the essence of the thing itself, the music of leaving.

The first of the slim collection's three sections, "Everyone's Gone to the Moon," explores this music through the quotidian observations and mundane intimacies of the world outside our front door. In many of these poems, poetic exploration is a means of getting at the truth of a memory, regardless of its circumstance. The moments worth remembering are fleeting and only acquire substance in the nostalgic act. Hence, what is true and real of a sister's childhood love is contained in one moment on a brilliant July day, or in an "us" that persists in a cascade of summer images. "The Trouble with Science" calls out the truth of memory and meaning, explaining that "science falls short. It overlooks / the power of the human heart / which has a memory all its own, /… undefiled by time / or faulty synapse" (44). This poem and others

in the second section, "Impossible Gardens," explore the longing inherent in remembering. If nostalgia is memory injected with longing and loss, some of the most poignant poems in this collection are those that intimate the quiet presence of absence: an empty slide "one year later," an uprooted tree alone, a lonely woman's broken shoes, or an island dog waiting for a forever home.

In the best of these poems, the elegant intimacy of the poetic voice earns our confidence and we believe fully in the truth of the memory. Through clear raw language and an aching vulnerability, McCallum's verses bypass the traps of synapse and cynicism and get to the quick of emotion and sensation. Thematically, she exposes the deep wounds that may resonate with us all—the sleepover invitation we never got, the dance we showed up to in the wrong dress, the gripping insecurity of failure. This vulnerability becomes poignant in three poems exploring the loss of a child, the last of which reminds us, "We can never take enough care" (47).

In the last section, "Her Own Blues," McCallum's exploration of loss and personal pain take on an existential tone and a more explicit interaction with form. Several poems explore poetry's unique capacity to communicate beyond words. In "How I Lose You," the sensation of emotional gravity is enhanced when the pain of intimacy lost is called out in two quiet adverbs:

> The way you get into bed at night,
> carefully.
> The way you ask if I want anything,
> politely. (88)

In "Legacy," this awareness of the power of poetic form converges with the collection's underlying exploration of the meaning of what is left behind, so that when the poet laments her inability to give her dying mother a poetic legacy, the mother reminds her, "*You are my poem* / … pausing between each word" (92). In *The Music of Leaving*, then, poetry is not only a means through which to access the felt truth of what has been loss, but it also becomes that truth itself.

Contributor Notes

Barbara Bickel is an artist, researcher, and educator. An Associate Professor of Art Education in the School of Art & Design and Director of Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies at Southern Illinois University, she teaches art as a social inquiry and meaning making process. To view her art portfolio and arts-based research and writing on-line visit www.barbarabickel.com.

Petra Bueskins is a Lecturer in Social Sciences within the School of Counselling at the Australian College of Applied Psychology. Prior to this she lectured in Sociology and Gender Studies at the University of Melbourne and Deakin University (2002-2009). Since 2009 she has been working as a psychotherapist in private practice. She is the editor of the *Psychotherapy and Counselling Journal of Australia*, on the international editorial committee of *Studies in the Maternal* and the *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative* and recently joined the board of Demeter Press (June 2014). Her research interests include motherhood, feminism, sexuality, social theory, psychotherapy and psychoanalytic theory and practice. She has published articles on all these subjects in both scholarly and popular fora. Her edited book *Motherhood and Psychoanalysis: Clinical, Sociological and Feminist Perspectives* was published in July 2014 by Demeter Press.

Pat Breton is a Ph.D. candidate in Gender, Feminist and Women's Studies at York University, Toronto, Ontario. Her research interests are Canadian public policy of waged and unwaged caring labour, maternal/child welfare and neoliberalism, violence against women, and racialized childhoods and child rights. Her work has been published in the *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative*

for Research and Community Involvement. Pat has been involved as an activist in the Violence against Women sector for over fifteen years.

Deborah Byrd is Professor of English and Women's and Gender Studies at Lafayette College, as well as Director of the college's new Center for Community Engagement. Her current research focuses on feminist and service-learning pedagogies and on designing effective mentoring and support programs for pregnant and parent teens.

Maria Collier de Mendonça has a Ph.D. in Communications and Semiotics from PUC-SP, the Catholic University of São Paulo, Brazil. She is a Visiting Professor at the Psychoanalytic Semiotics Post Graduate Course at PUC-SP. Her dissertation is entitled: *A Maternidade na Publicidade: Uma Análise Qualitativa e Semiótica em São Paulo e Toronto (Motherhood in Advertising: A Qualitative and Semiotic Analysis in São Paulo and Toronto)*. From January to July 2013, Maria conducted part of her doctoral research in Canada, as a CAPES Foundation Grantee, under the supervision of Dr. Andrea O'Reilly at York University, in Toronto.

Patti Duncan is Associate Professor and Director of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Oregon State University, where she specializes in transnational feminisms, women of color feminisms, and feminist media studies. She is author of *Tell This Silence: Asian American Women Writers and the Politics of Speech* (University of Iowa Press, 2004), co-director/producer of *Finding Face,* an award-winning documentary film, and co-editor of the 2014 Demeter collection, *East Asian Mothering: Politics and Practices*. Her current research focuses on narratives of rescue, migration, and motherhood in representations of women in the global South.

Miriam Edelson is a social activist, mother and writer. *Battle Cries: Justice For Kids with Special Needs* was published in 2005. *My Journey With Jake: A Memoir of Parenting and Disability* appeared in 2000. Her creative non-fiction and commentaries have been featured on CBC radio and in *The Globe and Mail, The Toronto Star,* and *This Magazine* as well as other periodicals. Born in New York, Edelson spent her teens in Toronto and completed her undergraduate studies at McMaster and Laval Universities. She is currently pursuing doctoral studies in sociology and bioethics part-time at the University of Toronto. Edelson lives in Toronto with her partner Andy King and her daughter Emma.

Regina Edmonds a clinical psychologist and Professor Emerita at Assumption College, Worcester, MA, USA. She also coordinated Assumption's Women's

Studies Program for over a decade. Her research focuses on discovering the qualities that characterize successful mother-daughter relationships, the treatment of trauma based disorders, and the cross-cultural experiences of mothers.

May Friedman teaches at Ryerson University in the School of Social Work and the Graduate Program in Communication and Culture. She is absolutely passionate about popular culture and has published extensively on the topics of motherhood, fat and digital technologies.

Catherine Bodendorfer Garner researches issues of reproductive labor, motherhood, U.S. and international contemporary literature, domestic care work, and empathy. In 2014 she was granted her Ph.D. in English through the University of Illinois at Chicago, where she now works as a lecturer.

Cayo Gamber, an Associate Professor of Writing and Women's Studies at the George Washington University, conducts research on the memorialization of the Holocaust as well as the role popular culture—as manifest in such cultural artifacts as the Barbie doll—plays in creating Western notions of girlhood and womanhood.

Troy D. Glover is Professor, University of Waterloo, Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies. Dr. Glover's research explores the advancement of healthy communities, community-based planning, and urban place-making with a focus on the politics of leisure policy.

Fiona Joy Green is a feminist, and the mother of an adult son. She holds the positions of Professor of Women's and Gender Studies and Associate Dean of Arts at the University of Winnipeg. She is the author of *Practicing Feminist Mothering* (2011) and co-editor of *Essential Breakthroughs: Conversations about Men, Mothers, and Mothering* (2015); *Chasing Rainbows: Exploring Gender-Fluid Parenting Practices* (2013); and *Maternal Pedagogies: In and Outside the Classroom* (2011). Fiona's latest research explores power, privacy and ethics related to mommy blogging.

Florence Pasche Guignard is a postdoctoral researcher at the Department for the Study of Religion at the University of Toronto. Her work engages issues at the intersection of religion and media, material culture, gender, embodiment, and ritual. Her interdisciplinary approach combines inputs from motherhood studies with her background in the study of religions.

Diana L. Gustafson is an Associate Professor of Social Science and Health

in the Faculty of Medicine, Division of Community Health and Humanities and affiliate faculty in the Department of Gender Studies at Memorial University, St. John's, NL, Canada. Together these positions allow her to pursue her commitment to health-related social justice issues with a particular focus on mothering and motherwork. Her book, *Reproducing Women: Family and Health Across Three Generations* (co-authored with Marilyn Porter, Fernwood, 2012) explores women's reproductive lives as narrated by three generations of Canadian women. Her research has also been published in academic and professional journals. She has been a long-standing member of MIRCI and served as book review editor for the Fall 2014 issue of the *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative.*

Tamar Hager, Associate Professor, teaches in Tel Hai College, Israel. Motherhood and critical feminist methodology are core issues of her academic research, writing and teaching. Her book *Malice Aforethought* (2012, in Hebrew) addresses the lives of two English working class mothers who killed their babies at the end of the 19th century.

Omri Herzog, Ph.D., is Associate Professor and the head of the Culture Studies Department at Sapir Academic College. His main research interests are corporal politics; the interface between canonical and popular; the horror genre; and Israeli culture. He writes literary criticism for the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz.*

Nicole Hill holds a Master of Arts in Integrated Studies from Athabasca University and is enrolled in the University of Alberta's Sociology Ph.D. program. Nicole's research interests include social justice, gender, culture, reproduction, and feminist theorizing. She resides in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada with her partner and two children.

Kirsten Isgro is an Associate Professor in Communication Studies at the State University of New York. She is the co-editor of *Mothers in Academia* (Columbia University Press, 2013), an anthology about the ways in which women as mothers are reshaping the cultural and intellectual dynamics of higher education. Additional publications include a chapter in *Women and Children First: Feminism, Rhetoric and Public Policy* (SUNY Albany Press, 2005) and articles in *Feminist Media Studies* and *Journal of Homosexuality.* She is the mother of nine-year old twin girls, one of whom is living with a rare and degenerative disease.

Kirun Kapur is the winner of the Arts & Letters Rumi Prize in Poetry

and the Antivenom Poetry Prize for her first book, *Visiting Indira Gandhi's Palmist.* Her work has appeared in *AGNI, Poetry International, FIELD, The Christian Science Monitor* and many other journals. She has taught creative writing at Boston University and has been awarded fellowships from The Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, Vermont Studio Center and Mac-Dowell Colony. She is the founder and co-director of the Boston-area arts program The Tannery Series and serves as Poetry Editor at *The Drum Literary Magazine,* which publishes exclusively in audio form. Kapur grew up in Hawaii and now lives north of Boston with her husband and son.

Laurie Kruk is Associate Professor, English Studies at Nipissing University, North Bay, where she teaches Canadian literature, Native literature, women's writing and the short story. She has published *The Voice is the Story: Conversations with Canadian Writers of Short Fiction* (2003) and three poetry collections: *Theories of the World* (1992), *Loving the Alien* (2006) and *My Mother Did Not Tell Stories* (Demeter, 2012).

Judith Lakämper is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of English at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. Her research focuses on motherhood, popular culture, psychoanalytic feminism, and affect theory.

D. Memee Lavell-Harvard is currently President of the Ontario Native Women's Association, a full time student currently completing her Ph.D. in Education at the University of Western Ontario, and is the first Aboriginal person ever to receive a Trudeau Scholarship Harvard is also a full-time mother of two girls, Autumn Sky and Eva Lillie. Ms. Lavell-Harvard's research addresses the epidemic of low academic achievement and high dropout rates among Aboriginal populations in Canada.

BettyAnn Martin is a second year Ph.D. student and narrative researcher with the Department of Education at Nipissing University in North Bay, Ontario. As well, she is an educator, mother, doula, and Postpartum Support International Coordinator for Western Ontario. Her research interests include maternal identity formation, as well as the educational, therapeutic, and liberatory aspects of shared personal narrative.

Brenda Faye McGadney is associate professor and Chair of the Social Work program, Siena Heights University, Adrian, MI. She has published in numerous scholarly journals and served as editor of a special issue on Ghana for *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping.* McGadney earned Ph.D. and MSW degrees from the Universities of Chicago and

Michigan, and had appointments at the Universities of Washington (Seattle), Ghana (Accra), and Windsor (Canada) and Wayne State (Detroit). A Fulbright awardee in 1979, the author's work in West Africa began in Sierra Leone, the Ivory Coast, and Senegal. In Ghana, McGadney has investigated indigenous knowledge about elder care; the role of grandmothers in the survival of severely malnourished children; and violent conflict and peacekeeping strategies from chiefs, stakeholders, and internally displaced women. She continues to focus much of her efforts on issues related to gender-based violence, and legal and social issues of refugees and asylum-seekers.

Aidan Moir is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in the Joint Graduate Program in Communication & Culture at York University. Her research addresses the social, political, and cultural tensions between iconography, personal identity, and branding. Her work highlights the parallels and similarities between the discourses of fashion to other social institutions.

Caitlin M. Mulcahy is Assistant Professor, St. Jerome's University, Department of Sexuality, Marriage, and Family. Her research focusses on a sociology of the intimate through a feminist lens, connecting private experiences of friendship and family back to the dominant gender discourses that shape everyday life. Her research has explored intimate contexts such as women's diary-keeping, friendships between cancer patients, and connections made between new mothers.

Elizabeth Cummins Muñoz is a writer and scholar of Latin American literature and gender studies. Her current work includes a collection of short stories and a project that examines mothering identities in the transnational context of immigrant domestic care-workers in the United States.

Rachel O'Donnell is a doctoral candidate in Political Science at York University, Toronto. Her ongoing work is on feminist critiques of science, colonialism, and biotechnology. She has lived and worked in Latin America, and has previously published on Sor Juana de La Cruz, revolutionary movements, and migration, as well as a few works of short fiction.

Andrea O'Reilly, Ph.D., is Professor in the School of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies at York University and is founder and director of *The Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement*, founder and editor-in-chief of the *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative* and founder and editor of Demeter Press, the first feminist press on motherhood. She

is editor and author of 19 books on motherhood including most recently *21ˢᵗ Century Motherhood: Experience, Identity, Policy, Agency* (2010); *The 21st Century Motherhood Movement: Mothers Speak Out on Why We Need to Change the World and How to Do It* (2011); *Academic Motherhood in a Post Second Wave Context: Challenges, Strategies, Possibilities* with Lynn O'Brien-Hallstein (2012); and *What do Mothers Need: Motherhood Activists and Scholars Speak on Maternal Empowerment for the 21ˢᵗ Century* (2012). She is editor of the first *Encyclopedia on Motherhood* (2010). In 2010, she was the recipient of the CAUT Sarah Shorten Award for outstanding achievements in the promotion of the advancement of women in Canadian universities and colleges. She is currently completing a monograph on Academic Motherhood and beginning a study on the Slut Walk Movement. She is twice the recipient (1998, 2009) of York University's "Professor of the Year Award" for teaching excellence. She is the proud mama of three fabulous and feminist adult children.

Hallie Palladino presented an earlier version of Motherhood's Opening Chapter at the 2012 MIRCI Conference in Toronto. She is a contributing author to two recent Demeter Press books, *Intensive Mothering: The Cultural Contradictions of Modern Motherhood* (2014) and *Stay-at-Home-Mothers: Dialogues and Debates* (2013). Her research interests include alternative mothering, mothering and social media and cultural trends in parenting. Hallie lives in Chicago with her husband and their two young children.

Diana C. Parry is Associate Professor, University of Waterloo, Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies. Utilizing a feminist lens, Dr. Parry's research explores the personal and political links between women's leisure and women's health, broadly defined. Dr. Parry's research privileges women's standpoints and aims to create social change and enact social justice by challenging the medical model of scholarship.

Emily January Petersen is a Ph.D. candidate and recipient of the presidential doctoral research fellowship in the Theory and Practice of Professional Communication at Utah State University. She is interested in professional identities from a feminist perspective, examining how women act as professional communicators through social media and historically.

Joanna Radbord is a lesbian feminist mother and a lawyer. 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.*, a Supreme Court of Canada decision resulting in the

recognition of same-sex relationships in dozens of federal and provincial statutes. She was counsel to a lesbian father in *Forrester v. Saliba,* which states that transsexuality is irrelevant to a child's best interests. She has acted for the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund in cases involving the feminization of poverty, particularly the spousal support variation case Boston and the retroactive child support case DBS. She was co-counsel to the Ontario and Quebec same-sex couples who won the freedom to marry in Halpern and on the Reference re: Same-Sex Marriage before the Supreme Court. Joanna also appeared as counsel in Rutherford, achieving immediate legal recognition for lesbian mothers, and represented the Rutherford families as intervener counsel in *A.A. v. B.B. v. C.C.,* the case allowing recognition of three parents in law.

Jen Rinaldi is an Assistant Professor in the Legal Studies Program at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology. She earned a Ph.D. in Critical Disability Studies at York University. In her dissertation she considered how disability diagnostic technologies affect reproductive decision-making. Rinaldi completed her MA in Philosophy at the University of Guelph, and earned a Combined BA[H] in Philosophy and Classical Civilizations at the University of Windsor.

Jaqueline McLeod Rogers is the mother of two young adult daughters and professor and chair in the Department of Rhetoric, Writing and Communications at The University of Winnipeg. She has several recent articles on women and the Internet ("Moms and Teen Daughters: Make Room for the Internet" and "Old[er] Women Writing Teachers Learning New[er] Technologies: Teaching and Trusting"). Recently, in fall 2014, she published an article about geopolitics and suffrage cartoons in Peitho, a journal exploring feminist rhetorics.

Martha Joy Rose, BFA, Master's in Mother Studies, CUNY, The Graduate Center, New York City; thesis pending. Director; Museum of Motherhood, President and Founder; MaMaPaLooZa Inc. a company by Women, Promoting (M)others for social, cultural and economic benefit. Coordinator for the Annual Academic M.O.M. Conference; contributor to *Encyclopedia of Motherhood* and *The 21st Century Motherhood Movement.* MarthaJoyRose@gmail.com.

Jane Satterfield, an award-winning poet and essayist, is the recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in Literature and the author of two poetry books: *Assignation at Vanishing Point* (2003) and *Shepherdess With*

an Automatic (2000). Born in England and educated in the U.S., she holds an M.F.A. from the University of Iowa. She has received three Individual Artist awards in poetry from the Maryland State Arts Council as well as fellowships from the Sewanee Writer's Conference and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. *Daughters of Empire: A Memoir of a Year in Britain and Beyond* (2009) is her first book of nonfiction. She lives in Baltimore with her husband, poet Ned Balbo, and her daughter, Catherine, and teaches at Loyola University.

Dorsía Smith Silva is Associate Professor of English at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras. She is the co-editor of the *Caribbean Without Borders: Caribbean Literature, Language and Culture* (2008), *Critical Perspectives on Caribbean Literature and Culture* (2010), and *Feminist and Critical Perspectives on Caribbean Mothering* (2013), and editor of *Latina/Chicana Mothering* (2011). Her work has appeared in several journals, including *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering, Journal of Caribbean Literature*, and *Sargasso*. She is currently working on two book projects about mothering.

Sudy Storm received her Master's in International Public Health at Oregon State University. As a midwife and medical anthropologist in remote villages of Sierra Leone, her research focuses on maternal-child health, traditional medical systems, and how introduction of biomedical models of healthcare influence perceptions of health and alters health behaviours.

Helena Vissing is a Danish psychologist and doctoral student at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, Los Angeles, specializing in motherhood studies and maternal mental health from psychoanalytic and somatic perspectives. Currently conducting a phenomenological study of the transition to motherhood with special focus on maternal subjectivity and the mother-daughter relationship.

Kate Williams is a Ph.D. candidate of English Literature at the University of Tulsa in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Her current research is focused on motherhood in second-wave feminist literature, particularly the fiction and memoirs of Joan Didion, Toni Morrison, Louise Erdrich, and Maxine Hong Kingston, and contemporary mothers' representations of motherhood online in mommyblogs and on social media sites.

——*Call for Papers*——

The editorial board is seeking submissions for
Vol. 7.1 of the *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative
for Research and Community Involvement* (JMI)
to be published in Spring/Summer 2016

Mothers, Mothering, and Motherhood in Literature

*(Fiction, Poetry, Drama, Life Writing,
Creative Non-Fiction, Social Media)*

In 1976, Adrienne Rich broke new ground with her text *Of Woman Born*, in which she challenged scholars to confront their tendency to avoid discussions of motherhood, observing: "We know more about the air we breathe, the seas we travel, than about the nature and meaning of motherhood." Rich's book helped to launch the academic study of mothering in literature, as evidenced by the publication of several key texts: *The Lost Tradition: Mothers and Daughters in Literature* (1980), *Mother Puzzles: Daughters and Mothers in Contemporary American Literature* (1989), *Women's Fiction Between the Wars: Mothers, Daughters, and Writing* (1998), *This Giving Birth: Pregnancy and Childbirth in American Women's Writing* (2000), and *Textual Mothers, Maternal Texts* (2010).

The aim of this issue is to advance the study of maternal representations in literary texts throughout history, across diverse narrative genres (fiction, poetry, drama, life writing, creative non-fiction, and social media), and from various maternal perspectives (nationality, ethnicity, race, class, ability, sexuality, ability, age, etc.). Papers from a wide range of disciplines and cultural perspectives, both theoretical/scholarly and creative (stories, narrative, creative non-fiction, poetry) are highly encouraged.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

**Articles should be 15-18 pages (3750 words) including references.
All should be in MLA style.**

Please see our style guide for complete details:
http://www.motherhoodinitiative.org/journalsubmission.html

SUBMISSIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY:
NOVEMBER 1, 2015

TO SUBMIT WORK ONE MUST BE A MEMBER OF MIRCI
http://www.motherhoodinitiative.org/membership.html

Please direct your submissions to:

Motherhood Initiative for Research and
Community Involvement (MIRCI)
140 Holland St. West, P. O. Box 13022,
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Website: http://www.motherhoodinitiative.org

Demeter Press

is seeking submissions (narrative and scholarly)
for an edited collection

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women
Editors: D. Memee Lavell-Harvard and Jennifer Brant

In October 2004 Amnesty International released a report titled *Stolen Sisters: A Human Rights Response to the Discrimination and Violence against Indigenous Women in Canada*, in response to the appalling number of Indigenous women who are victims of racialized and sexualized violence. This report noted over 500 missing or murdered Indigenous women. Tragically, since this initial report the numbers have risen. Noting that Indigenous women are eight times more likely to die as a result of violence, the most recent RCMP report documented 1181 missing or murdered Aboriginal women and girls (2013), with more distressing cases being reported every month. After conducting an extensive investigation here in Canada, in March of 2015 the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women issued their report condemning Canada for the ongoing failure to protect Indigenous women and girls calling it a "grave human rights violation" (UNCEDAW).

Over 40 separate reports have outlined the increase in racialized and sexualized violence against Indigenous women, yet the recommendations they contain are ignored. While these reports educate the Canadian public on the extent of the problem, the reality of violence is all too familiar and resonates within the hearts of Indigenous communities. This is not just an Aboriginal problem, or a women's issue, it is a national shame. The stories of our stolen sisters deeply affect the lives of all Indigenous peoples in Canada. These are the voices of our sisters, mothers, daughters, aunties and grandmothers. We hear and read about our missing sisters in the venues that connect us across Turtle Island. At almost every Indigenous conference we attend there is yet another moment of silence. Our intent is to honour those missing sisters and their families, to honour their lives and their stories so they are no longer remembered as just another sad statistic, or worse yet "just another Indian."

The failure of the government to respond to this issue has resulted in a national grassroots movement to call for a national inquiry. This collection supports the call for immediate response and action.

Topics may include (but are not limited to):
Scholarly or creative works, personal narratives, memoirs, poetry, art, related to violence against Indigenous women in Canada. Colonial violence, domestic abuse, the intersection of domestic violence and reproductive justice, law enforcement responses and reporting, over-policing and the criminalization of Indigenous women, crises intervention, media coverage and response on missing Indigenous women, social awareness and media campaigns, social activism, grassroots initiatives, community grief, loss and healing, intergenerational trauma and grief, experiences of families and children associated with violence against Indigenous women, cultural strength, resilience, and empowerment.

Submission Guidelines:

Abstracts: 250-500 words
Please include a 50-word biographic note.

Deadline for abstracts is May 15, 2015

Please send submissions and inquiries directly to:
mharvard@sympatico.ca and jbrant@brocku.ca

Full chapters of 4,000-5,000 words (15-20 pages)
due: September 1, 2015
and should conform to MLA citation format.

Note: All full chapters submitted will be included subject to review
Publication expected in 2016.

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Demeter Press

is seeking submissions for an edited anthology

Mothers in Public and Political Life
Editors: Lily Pourzand, Pınar Melis Yelsalı Parmaksız, and Simone Bohn

Even though in most nations women are almost half (if not the majority) of the population, in very few countries do they occupy a similar space in the formal institutions of political power. They are said to lack a key element for a successful career in public life: time. From this first perspective, no one is in a worse off than women who are mothers. From another perspective, however, motherhood is thought to help politicize women, as this life-changing experience makes them aware of the limitations of some specific public policies (such as child-care, maternal and paternal leave, gendered labor practices etc.) as well as more conscious of the centrality of more encompassing public policies, such as education, health care, and social assistance, both for the present and future generations.

This volume will explore the challenges, obstacles, opportunities and experiences of mothers who take part in political and/or public life. We welcome submissions which examine how public and/or political involvement could affect mothering and also how being a mother can potentially change women's political and/or public life. Particularly, we would like to explore how culture, social norms, political atmosphere, public views and personal or family life style affect women's political and/or public life when they are mothers. We are equally interested in works that examine how different mothering can be practiced by women who are politically and/or publicly active. Also of high interest are studies that analyze the politicization of women as mothers in times of social and political struggle or resistance, which may vary in scope, such as, for instance, environmental campaigns by a local group of mothers, and/or more national and even globalized political movements, of which the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo are an example.

Personal stories of women as mothers who are active in public or political life contribute to illustrating the difficulties, opportunities and dilemmas stemming from the intersection of politics and motherhood. As such, we welcome both scholarly as well as creative pieces to the volume.

Topics may include (but are not limited to):

Family life style and its challenges for mothers in political or public life; social judgments on good/bad mothering on mothers in political or public life; no privacy or private mothering for mothers in political or public life; women's domestic responsibilities and the constraints they impose on mothers in political or public life; how children respond or react to mothers in political or public life; public opinion on mothers in political or public life; the role of partners on the political or public life of mothers; political parties or employers' expectations from mothers in political or public life; male colleagues and mothers in political or public life; media/ social media and mothers in political or public life; childcare policies national/local policies and their effect on mothers in political or public life.

We would like to have a balanced combination of creative pieces, personal stories as well as scholarly research analyses in this collection. Please feel free to contact us with any suggestions.

Submission Guidelines:

Abstracts: 150-250 words
Please include a 50-word biographic note.
Deadline for abstracts is May 15, 2015

Please send submissions and inquiries directly to:
lilypourzand@gmail.com, melispy@gmail.com,
and simonebohn1204@gmail.com

Accepted abstracts have to submit the completed piece
(2500 to 5000 words, double spaced with references in MLA format)
by October 15, 2015.

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Demeter Press

is seeking scholarly and creative submissions
for an edited collection tentatively titled

Mothers and Domestic Violence

**Editors: Michele McIntosh, Tracy Royce,
and Valerie R. Stackman**

It is estimated that over a million North American women are assaulted by a current or former intimate partner each year, and over 3 million children witness domestic violence annually. For those mothers who experience what is variously known as domestic violence, partner abuse, intimate partner violence, or intimate terrorism, motherwork entails not only attempts to preserve the safety of self and child, but negotiating a legal system that sometimes criminalizes battered mothers for "failure to protect" their children.

This anthology aims to examine the intersection of mothering and domestic violence from a feminist perspective that foregrounds the lived realities of battered mothers and their children. We seek scholarly works from a broad range of academic disciplines, as well as interdisciplinary work and creative submissions. We welcome original empirical studies (including phenomenological research and critical qualitative inquiry), review papers, social and cultural critique, personal narratives, short fiction, and poetry. All submissions should be original work not previously published elsewhere.

Topics may include (but are not limited to):

Domestic violence during pregnancy; the impact of partner abuse on breastfeeding and childrearing; tactics of abuse that exploit mothers' love of their children; medical communities' response to battered mothers; battered mothers and intervention by law enforcement and child protective services; the impact of so-called "failure to protect" laws; mother-child solidarity within abusive households; children who are incarcerated for defending their mothers from abusers; battered mothers who are incarcerated; lesbian, bisexual, queer and transgender mothers' experiences with partner abuse and mainstream legal and social institutions; battered women of color and the justice system; the intersection

of domestic violence and reproductive justice; representations of mothers and domestic violence in news accounts, film, and other media; battered mothers, resistance, and social movements; children's and adult children's experiences of witnessing their mother's abuse.

Submission Guidelines:

Abstracts: 250 words or longer
Please include a 50-word biographic note.

Deadline for abstracts is June 1, 2015

Please send submissions and inquiries directly to:
mothersanddv@gmail.com

Subject heading: "Mothers and Domestic Violence abstract."
For creative prose submissions, please specify type in the body of your submission email (fiction versus creative nonfiction/memoir/personal essay).

Contributors will be responsible for ensuring that manuscripts adhere to MLA style.

Completed manuscripts of 2000-4500 words
(8-18 double spaced pages, including all references and endnotes; final length of creative works to be negotiated with the editors) will be due by October 1, 2015.

Please note that final acceptance for publication will depend upon the strength and fit of the manuscript.

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Demeter Press

is seeking submissions for an edited collection

Mothers, Sex and Sexuality

Editors: Michelle Walks and Joani Mortenson

Mothers are often not seen or appreciated as sexual beings, aside from their procreative capacities. The purpose of this collection is to explore the taboos and lived experiences of mothers' sexuality as it relates to asexuality, abstinence and celibacy, as well as to straight, lesbian, bisexual, queer, autoerotic, monogamous, and polyamorous activities. This collection will also explore mothers' experiences with relation to their children's sexuality.

As an academic volume, this anthology will include chapters from a variety of disciplines including but not limited to: biology, psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, social work, cultural studies, education, health sciences, law, criminology, and political science.

Topics may include (but are not limited to):

Sexuality as it relates to pregnancy, post-partum, and trying-to-conceive; sexuality among single mothers, monogamously partnered and polyamorous mothers; sexuality of mothers after divorce or death of a spouse or co-parent; teen mothers', older mothers', and grandmothers' sexuality; loss of sex drive with parenthood; being a sexually active parent; sexuality and breastfeeding; popular culture (media, celebrities, music, new stories); trans, butch, and genderqueer mothers' sexuality; mothers coming out as queer and children's coming out to mothers as queer; immigrant mothers' sexuality and indigenous mothers' sexuality; incarcerated mothers' sexuality; sexuality among mothers with disabilities; sexuality and religion; technology and sexuality (including cyborgs, online sex, sexting, phone sex, sex lines, social media, pornography); mothers and sexuality with respect to colonization and war; incest; sexual abuse; talking to children about sex and sexuality; mothers experiences in relation to sex work; mothers' sexuality in relation to socio-economic class, race/ethnicity, and age; hormone changes; sex education; BDSM; how mothers' sexuality relates to her work and workplace.

Submission Guidelines:

Abstracts: 250-400 words
Please include a 50-word biographic note.

Deadline for abstracts is June 1, 2015

**Please send submissions and inquiries directly to:
Michelle Walks and Joani Mortsenson at:
MothersSexAndSexuality@gmail.com**

Acceptances made by: July 31, 2015

**Accepted & completed papers
(15-18 pp. double-spaced including references, MLA format)
due: December 1, 2015**

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Demeter Press
is seeking submissions
for an edited anthology

Taking the Village Online:
Mothers, Motherhood, and Social Media

Editors: Lorin Basden Arnold and Betty-Ann Martin

The rise of social media has changed how we understand and enact relationships across our lives, including motherhood. The meanings and practices of mothering have been significantly impacted by the availability of online mother groups (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) as well as internet resources intended to 'enhance' and inform maternal experience and self-concept (ex. pinterest, YouTube). The village that now contributes to the mothering experience has grown exponentially, granting mothers access to interactional partners and knowledges never before available. This volume of works will explore the impact of social media forms on our cultural understandings of motherhood and the ways that we communicate about the experience and practice of mothering.

As an academic volume, this anthology may include chapters from a variety of disciplines including, but not limited to: psychology, sociology, anthropology, critical and cultural studies, gender studies, education, communication studies, philosophy, media studies, and political science. Submissions in creative formats (poetry, narrative) are also encouraged.

Topics may include (but are not limited to):

Mothers and their use of online forums and bulletin boards; discussions of mothering and motherhood in online forums; mothering and motherhood on public social media (e.g. Twitter, Pinterest, and Instagram); mothering/motherhood and potentially restricted social media forms (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, and Snapchat); mother blogs/vlogs/microblogs/podcasts; maternal identity and shared personal narrative; the impact of social media on family and mothering practices; cultural construction of mothers and motherhood through social media; communal identity and the policing of motherhood; family privacy and social media; interac-

tive media forms, maternal empowerment and/or self-efficacy; maternal knowledge and social media; motherhood "experts" and participatory media; the relationship between social media and the evolution of maternal identities; maternal presence, agency, and social media utilization; social authority and mothering in interactive media; and the impact of social media on maternal public policy; maternal social and political activism.

Submission Guidelines:

Abstracts: 250-400 words
Please include a 50-word biographic note.

Deadline for abstracts is June 1, 2015

Please send submissions and inquiries directly to:
Lorin Basden Arnold and Betty-Ann Martin at:
takingthevillageonline@gmail.com

Contributors will be responsible for ensuring that manuscripts adhere to MLA style.

Acceptances made by: July 31, 2015
Accepted and completed papers
(15-18 pp. double-spaced including references, MLA format)
due: December 1, 2015.

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Demeter Press

is seeking submissions for an edited anthology

Bad Mothers:
Representations, Regulations and Resistance

Editors: Michelle Hughes Miller, Tamar Hager and Rebecca Bromwich

Images of the "bad mother" are quite commonplace across late modern societies. Indifferent mothers, neglecting mothers, violent mothers and even murdering mothers appear in popular culture sites including news, literature, movies, soap operas and TV programs. In most of these cultural representations, bad mothers are either pathologized - presented as poor insane creatures—or presented as victims of social realities. Occasionally, they are demonized, and instead of being seen as victims they are blamed for the marginal sociocultural context in which they are mothering. Although bad mothers are ubiquitous representations, not much research has been done on the nature, social operation and roles of these images and claims, nor on the "othering" that bad mother representations produce across diverse social environments. While the "good mother" image has been the focus of many research projects, the bad mother has been quite neglected. The few researchers who address this powerful social image point out that bad mothers are culturally identified by what they do, yet they are also recognized by who they are. Mothers become potentially bad when they behave or express opinions that diverge from, or challenge, social or gender norms, or when they deviate from mainstream, white, middle class, heterosexual, non- disabled normativity. When suspected of being bad mothers, these women are surveilled, and may be disciplined, punished or otherwise excluded, by various official agents (i.e. legal, medical and welfare institutions), as well as by their relatives, friends and communities. Sometimes, they are judged and punished without clear evidence that they were neglecting or abusing their children.

In this anthology, we bring together empirical, theoretical and creative works about bad mothers. We are interested in submissions that narrate the "bad mother" and which reflect the diversity of experiences of mothers so identified, including diversity by subjectivities, social locations, governance, and cultural representations. We are particularly interested in creative works that illustrate and elaborate these experiences and representations, and in proposals that inform our understanding of bad mothers transnationally.

Topics may include (but are not limited to):
What are the relationships between cultural representations and management of the "good mother" and the "bad mother"? How are social actors, media, cultures, and institutions engaged in the processes of "othering" bad mothers? How are bad mothers represented by various cultural venues and agents, such as the media, literary texts and the cinema in different eras and localities? How do national and economic circumstances influence the social definitions of bad mothering? What are the sanctions that social and state institutions (such as medical, legal, governmental and welfare institutions) impose on mothers who have been labeled as bad in different eras and localities? How have constructions of bad mothers shifted, been complexed or been reconstituted in different eras, localities, cultures, ethnicities, classes and for diverse mothers and audiences? How have mothers internalized this image in different eras, localities, cultures, ethnicities and classes, and how have their maternal practices been influenced by this labeling and/or self-labeling? What are the patterns of labeling: which mothers experience these social processes and in what ways? How are processes of surveillance, discipline and punishment of bad mothers managed and maintained? How have mothers resisted or responded to such representations within the context of maternal suspicion, surveillance and control? What are the lived experiences of mothers who have been labeled as bad?

Submission Guidelines:
Abstracts: 250-400. Please include a 50-word biographic note.
Deadline for abstracts is July 1, 2015

Please send submissions and inquiries directly to:
badmotheranthology@gmail.com

Acceptances made by: August 1, 2015
Accepted and completed papers
(15-18 pages double-spaced with references in MLA format)
due: February 1, 2016

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Demeter Press

is seeking submissions for
an edited collection

Mothers Without Their Children

Editors: Charlotte Beyer and Andrea Robertson

This anthology will explore the subject of mothers without their children from a range of interdisciplinary perspectives. We welcome original submissions on new fields of enquiry that address the complex issues surrounding the figure of the mother without her children and her representation. These may include cultural, literary, socio-political, relational, ethical, phenomenological, and biological perspectives and investigations. We hope to include both scholarly and creative contributions, and would also consider direct contributions from mothers who have been separated from their children.

In her book from 1997 *Mother Without Child: Contemporary Fiction and the Crisis of Motherhood,* the critic Elaine Tuttle Hansen discussed this complex maternal figure, and urged for critical and feminist engagement with what she described as: 'the borders of motherhood and the women who really live there, neither fully inside nor fully outside some recognizable "family unit", and often exiles from their children' (p. 10). This anthology extends and expands this important enquiry by offering a variety of perspectives on the experiences, representations, creative manifestations, and embodiments of mothers without their children. The anthology also offers the opportunity to look at maternal experience and mothering in different historical and cultural contexts, thereby opening up the way in which we imagine and represent mothers without their children to reassessment and revision.

Topics may include (but are not limited to):

Maternal loss, bereavement, estrangement, absence, non-custodial mothering, mothering and migration, creative writing and mothering, voluntary and forced adoption, and mother-child separation through state intervention. Topics which address race, age, dis/ability, gender and sexual identity in relation to mothers without their children are also encouraged.

Submission Guidelines:

Abstracts: 400 words
Please include a 50-word biographic note.

Deadline for abstracts is July 1, 2015

**Please send submissions and inquiries directly to:
Charlotte Beyer and Andrea Robertson at
motherswithoutchildren@gmail.com**

Contributors will be responsible for ensuring that
manuscripts adhere to MLA style.

Notification of acceptance: September 1, 2015.

**Completed manuscripts
(15-18 pages double-spaced with references in MLA format)
will be due: March 1, 2016**

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Demeter Press

is seeking submissions for an edited anthology

Absent Mothers

Editor: Frances Greenslade

Missing, dead, disappeared, or otherwise absent mothers haunt us and the stories we tell ourselves. Our literature, from fairytales like Cinderella and the Little Mermaid to popular narratives like Cheryl Strayed's recent book Wild, is peopled with motherless children. The absent mother, whether in literature or life, may force us to forge an independent identity. But she can also leave a mother-shaped hole and a howling loneliness that dogs us through our adult lives. This anthology invites explorations of the theme of absent mothers from scholars, creative writers, bloggers, mothers and others who write and research in this area. Papers from a wide range of disciplines and cultural perspectives, both theoretical/scholarly and creative (stories, narrative, creative non-fiction, personal essays, poetry) are highly encouraged.

Submission Guidelines:
Abstracts: 400 words
Please include a 50-word biographic note.
Deadline for abstracts for scholarly submissions: July 30, 2015

Please send submissions and inquiries directly to:
fgreenslade@okanagan.bc.ca

Scholarly articles should be 15-18 pages (3750 words)
including references. All should be in MLA style.
Creative submissions should be from 2-15 pages.
No abstracts are required for creative submissions.
Final submissions: January 15, 2016

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Demeter Press is seeking submissions for an edited collection

Rape Culture 101: Programming Change

Editors: Geraldine Cannon Becker and Angel Dionne

Many people have been victims of rape, but we are all victims of what has been called a "rape culture." This topic deserves more attention towards education and prevention, and not just on the college campus. Rape culture is an idea that links rape and sexual violence to the culture of a society, and in which commonly-held beliefs, attitudes and practices normalize, excuse, tolerate, and even condone rape. This edited collection examines rape culture in the context of the current programming--attitudes, education, and awareness. We invite submissions that explore changing the programming in terms of educational processes, practices and experiences associated with rape culture across diverse cultural, historical, and geographic locations. Accepted papers will explore the complexity of rape culture from a variety of contexts and perspectives. We welcome interdisciplinary academic submissions from educators and students, as well as experiential accounts from members of various community settings doing work aimed at making a positive difference..

Questions for Engagement and Possible Topics for Consideration:

Kurt Cobain once said: "Rape is one of the most terrible crimes on earth and it happens every few minutes. The problem with groups who deal with rape is that they try to educate women about how to defend themselves. What really needs to be done is teaching men not to rape. Go to the source and start there." Is this easier said than done? Why? What are some challenges faced in changing the programming? What do we teach our sons and daughters about rape culture and how do we teach them? Do we need to talk with children—both boys and girls—from an early age about stereotypes and focus on the strengths both boys and girls have? Do we need more stories and movies that feature strong and realistic female characters who do not need to be rescued by boys or men and who may even save the day for everyone, without sacrificing themselves in the process? Role models? What do they currently see and hear on a daily basis through literature, media, social settings, surroundings, etc.? What do they experience? What about catcalling and street harassment?

How do these factor into rape culture? What are some steps that could be taken towards appropriate education and prevention? For specific ways to change or augment current cultural and academic education that could make a difference, educators and learners might first want to start thinking about their own programming. What are their thoughts on the topic of rape and how have their thoughts been formed over the years? What happens when victims speak out? Safe spaces need to be formed for people to be able to speak up and break the pained and fearful silence. We are open to your thoughts.

Submission Guidelines:

Abstracts: 300-500 words
Please include a 50-word biographic note.

Deadline for abstracts is August 31, 2015

**Please send submissions and inquiries directly to:
Geraldine Cannon Becker and Angel Dionne:
rapeculturechanging@gmail.com**

Contributors will be responsible for ensuring that manuscripts adhere to MLA style.

**Acceptance will be made by: October 31, 2015.
Completed manuscripts (18-25 pages double-spaced with references in MLA format) are due:
April 30, 2016.**

Please note that acceptance will depend on the strength and fit of the final piece.

Demeter Press is seeking submissions for an edited collection

Mothering in Distasters/Mothering Disasters

Editors: Caroline McDonald-Harker and Joanne Minaker

Mothers' experiences are multiple, varied and shaped by their social location. This edited collection examines motherhood and mothering in the context of disasters. Disasters are conceptualized as challenging, threatening, hazardous, precarious, and perilous circumstances in which mothers' lives are situated. Papers will explore the complex and diverse situations of mothering in disastrous settings and surroundings, including (but not limited to): environmental, historical, political, economic, cultural, and socially constructed disasters. We invite submissions that explore processes, practices and experiences associated with mothering in disaster across geographic region, culture, time, and space. Submissions are welcome from academic disciplines and community settings that contribute empirically, theoretically, methodologically to sociology, criminology, psychology, social work, women's and gender studies, anthropology, social policy, religious studies, political, economy, health and wellness, and the environment. Preference will be given to analyses informed by issues of gender, race, social class, sexuality, age, (dis)ability, family structure, culture, or geography. We are open to experiential accounts, quantitative and qualitative work, and papers aimed at policy and social change.

Possible Topics for Consideration:

Mothering in and through environmental disasters such as floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, ice storms, mud slides, tsunamis, oil spills, nuclear or toxic waste explosions or leaks; mothering in/through wars; mothering through/with terrorism; mothering and child labour; mothering in family situations, such as poverty, infidelity, under separation/divorce, miscarriage/infant/child loss, spouse death or bereavement; mothering with disease, illness, addictions; mothering through child abuse and/or rape/sexual assault; sex-trafficking/sex-slavery and mothering; and mothering and criminal justice involvement. *Questions for Engagement:* disaster issues/concerns/sustainability and mothering; recovery efforts and planning post-disaster; environmental activism; pregnancy and childbirth

in disaster settings; children, youth, women and vulnerability in disasters; disasters and separation of mothers and children, female-led households, single mothering, loss of home and homelessness, childcare and education, invisible labor of caregiving, intensive mothering and stigma/shame, and health and wellness; relief post-disaster; post-disaster trauma and distress; post-disaster social support, healing and rebuilding.

Submission Guidelines:

Abstracts: 500 words
Please include a 50-word biographic note.

Deadline for abstracts is August 31, 2015

Please send submissions and inquiries directly to:
Dr. Caroline McDonald-Harker and Dr. Joanne Minaker:
motheringindisasters@gmail.com

Contributors will be responsible for ensuring that
manuscripts adhere to MLA style.

Acceptance will be made by: September 30, 2015.

Completed manuscripts (18-25 pages double-spaced with references in MLA format) are due:
October 31, 2016.

Please note that acceptance will depend on the strength and fit of the final piece.

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Demeter Press is seeking submissions for an edited collection

Maternal Ambivalence

Editors: Tanya Cassidy, Susan Hogan and Sarah LaChance Adams

This anthology will examine the diverse and complex experiences of maternal ambivalence from a range of disciplinary perspectives.

Most simply, maternal ambivalence can be described as the simultaneous and contradictory emotional responses of mothers toward their children: love and hate, anger and tenderness, pity and cruelty, satisfaction and rage. Mothers often feel as though their own desires are directed against themselves when they are in opposition to their children's needs and wishes. When one's beloved child cries in despair at one's departure, one may both want and not want to leave. When the mother simultaneously desires intimacy and distance in relation to her child, when she feels the impulses to both harm and protect, to both abandon and nurture, this is when maternal ambivalence is at its perplexing height.

However, it would be reductive to think of maternal ambivalence merely as an emotional reaction. Maternal ambivalence is also a reflection of wider social forces: those which tell women to be independent and vigorous whilst simultaneously telling us to be nurturing and passive. Motherhood is a culturally and historically situated set of practices which are highly contested in ways which perhaps makes ambivalence an inevitability. Moreover, ambivalence itself may vary across space and time, offering a wide range of reactions to varying situations.

Submissions are welcome that approach the topic of maternal ambivalence through the lenses of feminist theory, literary criticism, and may include historical, cultural, semiotic, philosophical, and economic analyses. We hope to include both creative and scholarly submissions. Essays from all disciplinary perspectives are welcome, and interdisciplinary work is especially encouraged.

Topics may include (but are not limited to):

Social, cultural and historical aspects of mothering and ambivalence;

theoretical and philosophical explorations of maternal ambivalence; case studies; critiques of media representations; discussion of artistic explorations; cross-cultural, social-geographical or anthropological investigations of maternal practices which may seem ambivalent; other relevant topics regarding maternal ambivalence.

Submission Guidelines:

Abstracts: 350-400 words
Please include a 50-word biographic note.

Deadline for abstracts is September 1, 2015

Please send submissions and inquiries directly to:
Dr. Tanya Cassidy, Dr. Susan Hogan, Dr. Sarah LaChance Adams at:
maternalambivalence@gmail.com

Contributors will be responsible for ensuring that manuscripts adhere to MLA style.

Acceptances made by: January 1, 2016.

Completed manuscripts (15-18 pages double-spaced with references in MLA format) are due:
September 1, 2016.

Please note that acceptance will depend on the strength and fit of the final piece.

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and family; Matrilineal cultures and family; Feminism and child-rearing; Feminism and marriage; Feminism and divorce; Feminism and custody arrangements; Feminism and adoption; Feminism and justice within the family; Feminism and female foeticide / infanticide; Feminist perspectives on gender and socialisation within the family; Feminism and engendered upbringing; Feminism and honour killings in families; Feminism, sexuality and the family; Feminism, religion and family; Feminism and surrogate motherhood; Varieties of feminism and perspectives on family; Marxist Feminism and the family; Radical Feminism and the family; The Third Wave of Feminism and family; Post-modern Feminism perspectives on families; Feminism, patriarchy and families; Feminism and gender inequality in families; Feminism and the nuclear family; Feminism and the joint family; Difference, Feminism and the family; Gendered bodies, feminism and families; and Feminism and alternative reproductive technology

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:
Abstracts: 250 words
Please include a 50-word biographic note (detailing affiliations, past publication experience, and citizenship information).

Deadline for abstracts is September 15, 2015

Please send submissions and inquiries directly to:
Maria Jose Yax-Fraser, Kirthi Jaya Kkumar and Tola Pearce at:
FeministPerspectivesOnFamily@gmail.com

Notification of acceptance: October 15, 2015.

Completed manuscripts
(15-18 pages double-spaced with references in MLA format)
will be due: March 1, 2016

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Demeter Press

is seeking submissions for an edited collection

Mothers, Military and Society

Editors: Sarah Hampson, Udi Lebel, and Nancy Taber

Motherhood" and "military" are often viewed as dichotomous concepts, with the former symbolizing feminine ideals and expectations, and the latter suggesting masculine ideals and norms. Mothers, Military, and Society will contribute to a growing body of research that disrupts this false dichotomy. It will discuss the many ways in which mothers and the military converse, align, and intersect in society. This interdisciplinary volume will explore mothers and their connection with the military from global, contemporary, and historical perspectives. Chapters may include a variety of case studies, empirical research, theoretical perspectives, and personal narratives.

Topics may include (but are not limited to):
Mothers serving in the military; mothers and the military in comparative perspective; mothers in combat; breastfeeding in the military; mothers and deployment; mothers of service members; "motherhood" and "military" as ideas; changes in mothers and the military; gender constructions of "motherhood" and "military"; mothers and the military in popular culture; leadership in the military and the family; child custody, mothers and the military; educational perspectives on mothers and the military; equality narratives, mothers and the military; mothers and peace efforts; mothers, sexual harassment and sexual assault in the military; mothers and private defense agencies; mothers and the defense industry; mothers and "terrorism"; mothers and military professionalism; mothers, military and the environment.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:

Abstracts: 250-500 words
Please include a 50-word biographic note.

Deadline for abstracts is October 1, 2015

Please send submissions and inquiries directly to:
mothersandmilitary@gmail.com

Contributors will be responsible for ensuring that
manuscripts adhere to MLA style.

**Authors will be notified about the status of their proposal
by November 1, 2015.**

**Full chapters of 4,000-5,000 words (15-20 pages)
due May 1, 2016
and should conform to MLA citation format.**

Note: All full chapters submitted will be included subject to
review. Chapters will be reviewed, and sent back to authors
with requested revisions by August 1, 2016.

Final revisions of chapter due November 1, 2016.

Publication expected in 2017.

DEMETER PRESS
Forthcoming

Mothers Under Fire:
Mothering in Conflict Areas
Edited by Tatjana Takševa and Arlene Sgoutas
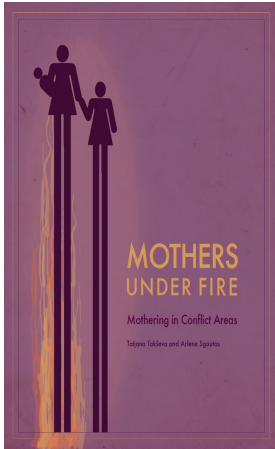
Mothers Under Fire: Mothering in Conflict Areas examines the experiences of women mothering in conflict areas. The aim of this collection is to engage with the nature and meaning of motherhood and mothering during times of war and/or in zones experiencing the threat of war. The essays in the collection reflect diverse disciplinary perspectives through which scholars and field practitioners reveal how conflict shapes mothering practices. One of the unique contributions of the collection is that it highlights not only the particular difficulties mothers face in various geographic locations where conflict has been prevalent, but also the ways in which mothers display agency to challenge and negotiate the circumstances that oppress them. The collection raises awareness of the needs of women and children in areas affected by military and/or political violence worldwide, and provides a basis for developing multiple policy frameworks aimed at improving existing systems of support in local contexts.

"*Mothers Under Fire: Mothering in Conflict Areas* is an excellent and welcome contribution to the study of gender and conflict, and in particular the impact of conflict on mothers and mothering. Through different disciplinary perspectives, first person interviews, and historical and contemporary cases across geographic regions, this book convincingly demonstrates how mothers have agency in times of conflict and post-conflict."
—Kristen P. Williams, Clark University

Tatjana Takševa is an Associate Professor at the English Department and the Women and Gender Studies Program at Saint Mary's University in Halifax, Canada. She has published articles on motherhood and consumerism, motherhood and teaching, intensive mothering practices, as well as Renaissance literature and multiculturalism, cross-cultural communication and digital media. Her current research is focused on the recent Balkan war, the enforced impregnation of women in the rape camps, and mothering children born of rape. She is currently working on genocidal rape, motherhood and the discourse of national identity on the Balkans. She is a member of a research team working on wartime rapes and trans-generational trauma in post-WWII Germany and post-conflict Bosnia, and a member of the Central and Eastern European Studies Research Group – Groupe de recherche en études de l'Europe Centrale et de l'Est at the University of Ottawa. She has presented her research on the Bosnian rape camps at a number of national and international public and scholarly forums.

Arlene Sgoutas is an Associate Professor and Director at the Institute for Women's Studies and Services at Metropolitan State University of Denver in Denver, CO. Her research and teaching interests are focused on feminist interventions in international relations with an emphasis on women's movements in the developing world.

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Forthcoming

Mothers, Mothering and Sex Work
Edited by Rebecca Bromwich and Monique Marie DeJong

In a transnational, intersectional framework, this book discusses lived experiences of, legal and governmental frameworks affecting and theorizations of mothers and sex work. This is the first collaboration of its kind that is specifically focused on Canada and explores not only what is done to or about sex workers who are mothers under governmental regimes or exploitative traffickers in the context of political and social systems that continue to disempower women in general and mothers in particular but also the agencies of mothers who are sex workers and the mothers of those engaged in sex work. This book seeks to open a space for the study of connections between sex work and mother work. The text provides a venue for telling stories by sex workers who are or were mothers. As such, this collection goes beyond a study of how mothering in the context of sex work is regulated by law and society to look at the agencies and lived experiences of sex workers who are mothers. It also looks at discourses of sex work and motherhood as complementarily regulating the sexuality of women in a way that re-inscribes and maintains a patriarchal social order.

Rebecca Jaremko Bromwich is a Ph.D. student (ABD) at Carleton University in the Faculty of Law and Legal Studies. She has a B.A. (Hon.) in social/ cultural anthropology from the University of Calgary, an LL.B. and an LL.M. from Queen's and a Graduate Certificate in Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies from the University of Cincinnati. Her Ph.D. research has theoretical foundations in feminist discourse analysis. Called to the Bar of Ontario in 2003, Rebecca has previously researched and published in a variety of areas, including feminist research about motherhood, youth criminal justice law, law practice management and equality issues relating to women and members of other historically marginalized groups in the legal profession. She is a Part-Time Professor at the University of Ottawa Faculty of Law and a staff lawyer, legislation and law reform with the Canadian Bar Association and has four amazing children.

Monique Marie DeJong is a senior author, book editor, creative writer, and marketing and branding consultant who owns a business collaborating with seasoned visionary entrepreneurs on books and ethical, authentic marketing. For over a decade, she has interviewed and captured the voices of thought leaders, migrant workers and farmers, architects, scientists, artists, filmmakers, non-profit founders, and more. During her time in Washington, D.C., Monique was the writer to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution and also reported on children's rights. She began her career as the associate editor for NBC's Today show travel editor in Los Angeles, California. Her work has appeared in a wide variety of international print, radio, TV, and digital media as well as New York Times bestselling books. She received a BA in English at Santa Clara University and attended both Stanford University's Creative Writing Institute and UC Berkeley Extension's Professional Sequence in Editing program.

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Natal Signs: Cultural Meanings of Pregnancy, Birth and Parenting
Nadya Burton, (Ed)

**NATAL SIGNS:
CULTURAL MEANINGS
OF PREGNANCY, BIRTH AND
PARENTING**

Nadya Burton, (Ed)

Representations of pregnancy, birth and early parenting are simultaneously diverse (grounded in different social, religious and cultural contexts), and normative (they tend to reflect the status quo and romanticized notions of these profound life events). This collection explores diverse cultural representations of childbirth and related life events with a focus on exploring and unsettling normative and stereotypical representations. The work included seeks to engage representations that challenge, transgress and resist cultural norms.

Nadya Burton, PhD is a sociologist and Associate Professor in the Midwifery Education Program at Ryerson University. Her teaching is primarily dedicated to helping future midwives work competently, compassionately and effectively across differences of class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, religion ability and language, as well as to thinking critically about midwifery in a broader social and cultural context. Her research focuses on midwifery as a practice of social change; provision of midwifery care to those without health care insurance; and genetic screening, informed choice and disability rights.

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Forthcoming

July 2015
Black Motherhood(s): Contexts, Contours and Considerations
Edited by Karen T. Craddock, Ph.D.
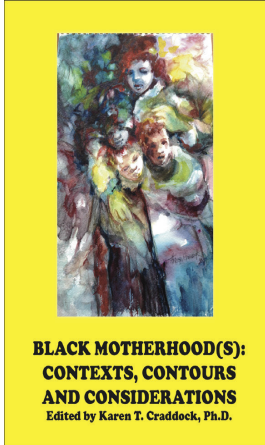
This book considers Black Motherhood through multiple and global lenses to engage the reader in an expanded reflection and to prompt further discourse on the intersection of race and gender within the construct of motherhood among black women. With an aim to extend traditional treatments of black motherhood that are often centered on a subordinated and struggling perspective, these essays address some of the hegemonic reality while also exploring nuance in experiences, less explored areas of subjugation, as well as pathways of resistance and resilience in spite of it. Largely focusing within domains such as narrative, identity, spirituality and sexuality, the book deftly explores black motherhood by incorporating varied arenas for discussion including, literary analysis, expressive arts, historical fiction, the African Diaspora, reproductive health, religion and social ecology.

Karen T. Craddock is an Applied Developmental Psychologist whose research, writing and consultation practice concentrates on the socio-cultural context of child, family and community development primarily within the fields of Education and Health. Her exploration of psychosocial functioning, social-emotional wellness and neuroscience focuses within the frameworks of relationship, maternal/women's studies, expressive healing, learning and support systems, especially among ethno-culturally diverse and marginalized communities.

Dr. Craddock is faculty and researcher at the Jean Baker Miller Training Institute at the Wellesley Centers for Women/Wellesley College exploring the intersections of ethno-cultural contexts, relationship and brain science while developing applied strategies across both research and practice toward social justice, equity and overall well-being. She is co-founder and director of Social-Emotional Learning for Families – SELF © a culturally responsive, trauma informed and strength-based training and research initiative designed to work directly with women and families to build on and cultivate social-emotional skills, personal/collective efficacy and community wellness. Karen's extensive experience includes primary investigator roles in United States federally funded exploratory and program evaluation research, as well as senior academic and administrative roles in higher education, private and the non-profit sectors, which include Harvard University and Education Development Center, Inc.

She has published and presented nationally and internationally on topics including parenting in cultural contexts, social-emotional impact of societal stressors on child achievement and family health, African-American maternal wellness, Native American engagement in STEM, mental health of women of color, personal narrative and learning in early childhood. Her work is fueled by her desire to build bridges between innovative thinking and creative practice by using action research and models of collective impact to empower and enrich lives. (Ed.M. Harvard University; PhD Tufts University).

BLACK MOTHERHOOD(S): CONTEXTS, CONTOURS AND CONSIDERATIONS
Edited by Karen T. Craddock, Ph.D.

July 2015
210 pages $29.95
ISBN 978-1-927335-25-3

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Forthcoming

Reading/Speaking/Writing the Mother Text
Essays on Caribbean Women's Writing
Edited by Paula Sanmartin and Cristina Herrera

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Reading/Speaking/Writing
the Mother Text:
Essays on Caribbean
Women's Writing

Edited by Paula Sanmartín and
Cristina Herrera

While scholarship on Caribbean women's literature has grown into an established discipline, there are not many studies explicitly connected to the maternal subject matter, and among them only a few book-length texts have focalized motherhood and maternity in writings by Caribbean women. *Reading/Speaking/Writing the Mother Text: Essays on Caribbean Women's Writing* encourages a crucial dialogue surrounding the state of motherhood scholarship within the Caribbean literary landscape, to call for attention on a theme that, although highly visible, remains understudied by academics.

While our collection presents a similar comparative and diasporic approach to other book-length studies on Caribbean women's writing, it deals with the complexity of including a wider geographical, linguistic, ethnic and generic diversity, while exposing the myriad ways in which Caribbean women authors shape and construct their texts to theorize motherhood, mothering, maternity, and mother-daughter relationships. Though certainly it could be argued that the majority of well-known writers originate from Anglophone and Francophone islands, we insist on recognizing writers from across the Caribbean region to demonstrate the diversity and fluidity of women's voices that may serve as a point of (dis)connection among the writers. The texts engaged in this study do not idealize or romanticize motherhood; instead, they reveal the often-problematic ways that motherhood and maternal relationships are informed, unsettled, and even dismantled by the daily and historical challenges faced by women in a region that bears the violent mark of colonization.

Cristina Herrera is Associate Professor of Chicano and Latin American Studies at California State University, Fresno. She holds a PhD in English from Claremont Graduate University and specializes in contemporary Chicana/Latina literature. She has published in journals such as Chicana/Latina Studies, Confluencia, and Journal of Caribbean Literature and is the author of *Contemporary Chicana Literature: (Re)Writing the Maternal Script* (2014).

Paula Sanmartín is an Associate Professor of (Afro)Spanish American and (Afro)Caribbean literatures at California State University, Fresno. She holds a Licenciatura from Complutense University (Spain) and an M.A and a Ph.D. in comparative literature, specializing in African American and Afro–Latin American women's writing, from the University of Texas at Austin. Her previous publications have appeared in journals such as MaComère and Revista Iberoamericana, and as part of a book on African American and Afro-Caribbean women's literature. She is a member of the editorial board of Cubanabooks, which publishes works by Cuban women authors, and she is the author of *Black Women as Custodians of History: Unsung Rebel (M)Others in African American and Afro-Cuban Women's Writing* (2014).

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Forthcoming

The Mother-Blame Game
Edited by Vanessa Reimer and Sarah Sahagian
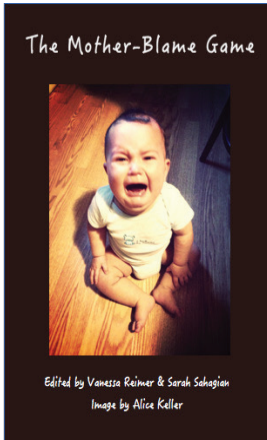
The Mother-Blame Game is an interdisciplinary and intersectional examination of the phenomenon of mother-blame in the twenty-first century. As the socioeconomic and cultural expectations of what constitutes "good motherhood" grow continually narrow and exclusionary, mothers are demonized and stigmatized—perhaps now more than ever—for all that is perceived to go "wrong" in their children's lives. This anthology brings together creative and scholarly contributions from feminist academics and activists alike to provide a dynamic study of the many-varied ways in which mothers are blamed and shamed for their maternal practice. Importantly, it also considers how mothers resist these ideologies by engaging in empowered and feminist mothering practices, as well as by publicly challenging patriarchal discourses of "good motherhood."

Vanessa Reimer is a PhD candidate in York University's Graduate Program in Gender, Feminist and Women's Studies. She is the co-editor of Mother of Invention: How Our Mothers Influenced us as Feminist Academics and Activists (Reimer and Sahagian 2013). Her research interests include feminist studies in religion, girlhood, and mothering.

Sarah Sahagian is a PhD candidate in Gender, Feminist and Women's studies at York University, where she is currently writing her dissertation on the mothering of inter-ethnic children. Her writing has appeared in such publications as Chasing Rainbows, a popular anthology on gender fluid parenting, as well as The Huffington Post,the pop culture website Comments Enabled and the Journal of the Motherhood Initiative. Sarah also is the co-editor of the Demeter Press book Mother of Invention: How Our Mothers Influenced Us as Feminist Academics and Activists.

September 2015
200 pages $24.95
ISBN 978-1-926452-14-2

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October 2015
Doulas and Intimate Care:
Bodies, Borders and Birth
Edited by Angela Castañeda & Julie Searcy

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Doulas and Intimate Care: Bodies, Borders and Birth

Edited by Angela Castañeda and Julie Searcy

October 2015
200 pages $24.95
ISBN 978-1-926452-13-5

This edited volume focuses on doulas and the intimate practices involved with doula care. It raises critical questions about the social and cultural meanings of attending to women during the transition to motherhood. In her book *The Tender Gift* (1973), medical anthropologist Dana Raphael first applied the word doula to birth culture when describing the importance of "mothering the mother" and increasing successful breastfeeding results during the fourth trimester. Today the term doula covers a much broader field of birth work, which includes birth, postpartum and full spectrum doulas or doulas who care for women during abortion, adoption, surrogacy, miscarriage and stillbirth.

This collection includes academic and personal essays written by a diverse group of scholars, including practicing midwives and doulas. This volume privileges the voices of doulas and researchers who study doulas, as we explore intimate labor, knowledge and the construction of different material realities of the birthing body. Contributing chapters focus on doulas as cultural brokers and translators during birth, doulas as mediators between birthing bodies and other care professionals such as labor and delivery nurses, the work of full spectrum doulas as birth activists working as abortion doulas, and the ways in which doulas negotiate the multiple identity transformations surrounding birthing bodies. As doulas negotiate their work, they represent a community in constant negotiation of borders and boundaries, one where we can turn as scholars to think through the process of birthing and what it means for the kind of work mothering entails.

Angela Castañeda is Associate Professor of Anthropology at DePauw University. Her research in Brazil, Mexico, and the U.S. explores questions on religion, ritual, expressive culture and most recently, the cultural politics of reproduction, birth and motherhood. In addition to her work as a practicing birth and postpartum doula, she also volunteers as a Spanish childbirth educator in Bloomington, Indiana, where she lives with her family.

Julie Johnson Searcy is finishing her PhD in Anthropology and Communication and Culture at Indiana University. Her dissertation research in South Africa examines the space where reproduction, disease and technology intersect as women navigate pregnancy, birth and high rates of HIV/AIDS infection. Interested in issues of gender, reproduction and performance, she also works as a doula and childbirth educator.

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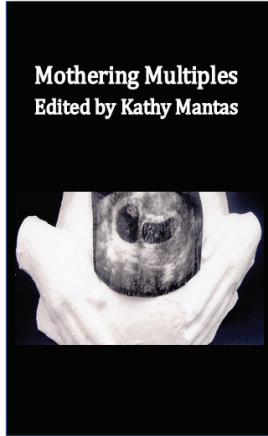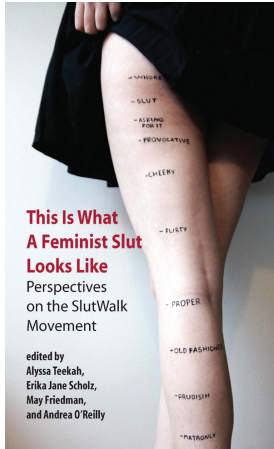please email info@demeterpress.org

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October 2015
Looking for Ashley: Re-Reading What the Smith Case Reveals about the Governance of Girls, Mothers and Families in Canada
By Rebecca Jaremko Bromwich

Looking for Ashley: Re-Reading What the Smith Case Reveals about the Governance of Girls, Mothers and Families in Canada

By Rebecca Jaremko Bromwich

The 2007 death by self-induced strangulation in prison of nineteen year old inmate Ashley Smith drew a great deal of public attention. The case gave rise to a shocking verdict of homicide in the 2013 inquest into the cause of her death. In this book, I inquire into questions about of what social problem or phenomenon Ashley Smith is a "case," and what governmental work is done by prevalent constructions of her as an exemplar. This book performs a critical discourse analysis of figures of Ashley Smith that emerge in her case, looking at those representations as technologies of governance. It argues that the Smith case is read most accurately not as an isolated system failure but an extreme result of routine, everyday brutality, of a society and bureaucracies' gradual necropolitical successes. It critically analyzes how representations of Ashley in the case leave intact, and even reinforce, logics and systems governing gender, motherhood, security, risk, race thinking and exclusion, in power and knowledge that make it predictable for similar deaths in prison to recur. It argues that, in the logics underlying constructions through which Ashley Smith was celebritized and sacralized, mothers', girls' and women's subjectivities and agencies are made unknowable and even unthinkable while the racialized social boundaries of a white settler society are maintained. This book attempts to intervene in those logics to help make alternative outcomes possible and to take steps towards questioning the raced, classed and heteronormative boundaries of commonly assumed figures of the "noble victim", "good girl" and "good mother" while supporting the agencies of adolescent girls in actively playing a part in the authoring of their lives.

October 2015
250 pages $34.95
ISBN 978-1-926452-69-2

Rebecca Jaremko Bromwich has a B.A. (Hon.) in social/ cultural anthropology from the University of Calgary, an LL.B. and an LL.M. from Queen's and a Graduate Certificate in Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies from the University of Cincinnati. This book is adapted from her Ph.D. dissertation, which she completed at Carleton University, in the Department of Legal Studies. In her Ph.D. research, Rebecca is working towards an understanding of what insights from the field of critical studies and cultural theory of girls studies can bring to law and legal studies.

Called to the Bar of Ontario in 2003, Rebecca works as a lawyer, and has previously researched and published in a variety of areas, including youth criminal justice law, law practice management and equality issues relating to women and members of other historically marginalized groups in the legal profession as well as contributing as author and co-editor to several Demeter Press anthologies. She is a Contract Instructor at Carleton's Department of Law and Legal Studies, a Part-Time Professor at the University of Ottawa Faculty of Law, and a staff lawyer, legislation and law reform with the Canadian Bar Association. All views expressed in this book are hers alone and do not reflect the views of any organization with which she is or has ever been affiliated.

DEMETER PRESS
Forthcoming

November 2015
Screening Mothers: Motherhood in Contemporary World Cinemas
Edited by Dr. Asma Sayed

Using a variety of critical and theoretical approaches, the contributing scholars to this collection analyze culturally specific and globally held attitudes about mothers and mothering, as represented in world cinema. Examining films from a range of countries including Afghanistan, India, Iran, Nepal, Eastern Europe, Canada, and the United States, the various chapters contextualize the socio-cultural realities of motherhood as they are represented on screen, and explore the maternal figure as she has been glamorized and celebrated, while simultaneously subjected to public scrutiny. Collectively, this scholarly investigation provides insights into where women's struggles converge, while also highlighting the dramatically different realities of women around the globe.

Asma Sayed, PhD, researches Canadian literature in the context of global multiculturalism. Her current research focuses on Islamophobia and the image of Muslim women in popular culture, particularly in Indian cinema. She teaches women's and gender studies, cultural studies, communication studies and comparative literature at a number of western Canadian universities. Her recent edited works include *M. G. Vassanji: Essays on His Works* (2014), *Writing Diaspora: Transnational Memories, Identities and Cultures* (2014), and *World on a Maple Leaf: a Treasury of Canadian Multicultural Folktales* (2011).

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Forthcoming

November 2015
What's Cooking, Mom?
Narratives About Food and Family
Edited by Florence Pasche Guignard & Tanya Cassidy

What's Cooking, Mom? offers original and inventive narratives, including auto-ethnographic discussions, of representations, discourses and practices about and by mothers regarding food and families. When it comes to "food choices" (or lack thereof), mothers stand at the intersection of several strong and sometimes conflicting forces and interests, for instance those in the food industry and public health policies. Daily decisions about food are usually thought of, in a Western context, as a matter of personal choice and private matter, but as the chapters in this volume show, there are important cross-cultural variations associated with these issues. With diverse global and comparative cross-cultural narratives, this volume is posed to offer important literary and ethnographic perspectives. These narratives discuss the multiple strategies through which mothers manage feeding themselves and others, and how these are shaped by international and regional food politics, by global and local food cultures and by their own ethical values and preference, as well as by those of the ones they feed. Many of these mothers ask themselves (and others) "How will I feed my child?", but often also have to consider the question "What should we eat or avoid consuming?". The answers to these questions make for fascinating and sometimes sad stories which anyone interested in maternal considerations about consumption and family will find invaluable.

After completing her PhD in the comparative study of religions at the University of Lausanne (Switzerland), Florence Pasche Guignard joined the Department for the Study of Religion at the University of Toronto (Canada) as a postdoctoral researcher in 2012. Her work engages issues at the intersection of religion and gender, embodiment, ritual, media and material culture. Food and foodways also count among her research interests. Previously, she has published on topics such as religion and ornaments in devotional Hindu poetry, on religion and toys, games and dolls, and on religious rituals and representations on video sharing website. Her current research project, entitled "Natural Parenting in the Digital Age. At the Confluence of Mothering, Religion, Environmentalism and Technology" is supported through a fellowship of the Swiss National Science Foundation. Her most recent and forthcoming publications focus on the intersection of religious discourses with motherhood, pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding, with a particular focus on ritual and media.

Tanya M. Cassidy is a Canadian sociologist who received her doctorate from the University of Chicago. Currently she is an Affiliated Researcher in the Department of Anthropology at the Maynooth University in Ireland where she held her Cochrane Fellowship. She is also an adjunct Professor with the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, Criminology at the University of Windsor, Ontario, Canada. Her doctoral research, from the Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago, USA, concerned a socio-cultural study of gender, family and alcohol in Ireland. Since then she has lectured in both Sociology and Anthropology in Ireland, England, and Canada. In 2005 she took a career break that has resulted in a new research trajectory that connects her long-standing theorisation of consumption and identity with a more urgent public policy agenda concerning premature birth and infant feeding.

November 2015
250 pages $24.95
ISBN 978-1-926452-18-0

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Forthcoming

Mothering Multiples
Edited by Kathy Mantas

There has been an increase of twin births and higher order multiple birth babies born in Canada and around the world in the past few decades. Mothering Multiples, an edited collection, seeks to (re)explore, (re)present, and make meaning of the process of becoming pregnant, pregnancy, childbirth, and mothering experiences with multiples. Chapters, both theoretical and creative in nature, include a wide range of disciplines and cultural perspectives. Additionally, these scholarly and more artful accounts, provide insight into some of the possibilities and complexities inherent in mothering multiples, and contribute to a body of literature that although present, is also limited.

Kathy Mantas is an educator, artist-researcher, and mother. She is an Associate Professor in the Schulich School of Education at Nipissing University in North Bay, Ontario. Her research interests are interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary in nature and include: life-long learning; teacher knowledge, identity and teaching-learning relationships; holistic and transformative approaches to education; arts education and artistry in teaching-learning contexts; co-creative art making processes and creative forms of inquiry; wellness education through artful and aesthetic approaches; and women's studies and health issues.

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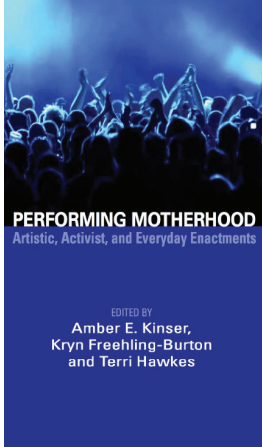MIRCI Members/Demeter authors/editors/contributors receive 40% off all titles:
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Anansesem: Telling Stories and Storytelling African Maternal Pedagogies
By Adwoa Ntozake Onuora

Anansesem: Telling Stories and Storytelling African Maternal Pedagogies is a composite story on African-Canadian mothers' experiences of teaching and learning while mothering. It seeks to celebrate the African mother's everyday experiences and honour her embodied and cultural knowledges as important sites of meaning making and discovery for the African child. Through the Afro-indigenous art of Anancy storytelling, memoir, creative non-fiction and illustrations, the author takes you on an evocative narrative journey that focuses on how African descended women draw upon and are central to African childrens' cultural, social and identity development. In entering these stories, readers access their joys, sadness, strengths and weaknesses as they mother in the midst of marginalization. The book is a testament to the power of counter-storytelling for inspiring internal and external transformation.

"Hallelujah! Finally! One of our "babies" has used the language and the euro-cen-tric dominated system of the academy to document, re-validate, and reassure Afri-can descendant parents in Canada, about the "rightness" of our parenting! Anans-esem re-iterates what sister/sistah/granny/aunty/uncle/father/brother/ community Mothers of African-descendant children have been "doing": it extrapolates the "knowing and doing" of our ances-tors—free or oppressed, who used art forms as "cultural instruc-tion" for thriving. Onuora is undoubtedly a product of "cultural genetics": she knows, genetically and culturally! Everyone who believes in the equality of all peoples must read this. Anansesem is unequivocal about the essentiality of using cultural forms in the making of a person. She is right—our children's "thrive ba-rometer" is elevated by strategies that build "cultural, social and identity consciousness": their "African Selfhood"; their "Being". Peaceful Resistance! Survival! Possibility!"
—Joan Grant Cummings, parent, Black feminist activist, 2015

"Readers put your hands together for Adwoa Onuora's book which shines the spotlight on those Knowledge Creators who are seldom in the light: Mothers, Afro-origin mothers; the Village   it takes to raise a child; Storytellers and Artists. Adwoa's book is Soul-affirming and Fun."
—Rita Shelton Deverell, theatre artist, media producer, co-founder of Vision TV, and Adjunct Professor of Women's Studies at Mount Saint Vincent University

Adwoa Ntozake Onuora is a Lecturer at The University of The West Indies, Mona in Kingston, Jamaica.

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Criminalized Mothers, Criminalizing Mothering
Edited by Dr. Joanne Minaker and Dr. Bryan Hogeveen

CRIMINALIZED MOTHERS
CRIMINALIZING MOTHERING

EDITED BY
Joanne Minaker and Bryan Hogeveen
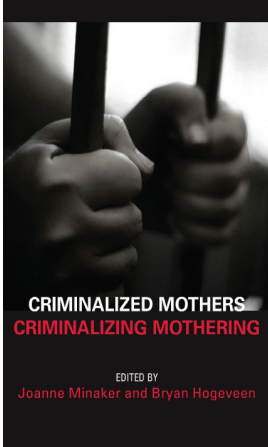
As the fastest growing prison population worldwide, more and more women are living in cages and most of them are mothers (Balfour and Comack). This alarming trend has huge ramifications for women, children and communities across the globe. Orange Is The New Black notwithstanding empathy for mothers behind bars and concern for criminalized mothers in the community is in short supply (OITNB, Kerman). Mothers are criminalized for their vulnerabilities and for making unpopular but difficult choices under material and ideological conditions not of their own choosing. *Criminalized Mothers, Criminalizing Mothering* shines a spotlight on mothers who are, by law or social regulation, criminalized and examines their troubles and triumphs. Unlike the Netflix series Orange is the New Black, this book offers a critical and compassionate lens on social (in)justice, mass incarceration, and collective miseries women-as-a-group experience (i.e. economic inequality, gendered violence, devalued care work, lone-parenting etc.). This book is about mothers' encounters with systems of control, confinement, and criminalization, but also their experiences of care.

Criminalized Mothers, Criminalizing Mothering broadens the scope of criminalization in order to more fully understand criminalizing as a complex and nuanced process, intimately connected to forces of social exclusion and marginalization. Power relations and systemic issues – poverty, street entrenchment, colonialization, and patriarchy – figure prominently in the analyses. Taken together this volume complicates dominant narratives about criminalization and motherhood. The authors demonstrate that while motherhood is generally valued, mothers (especially marginalized mothers) are habitually devalued, their rights violated, and their capacity to parent put on trial, which can have devastating consequences for women and their families. We maintain that practices and penalties of criminalization emerge inside and outside of formal criminal justice and correctional systems; criminalization – or the threat of being criminalized – impacts all mothers, especially women who transgress hetero-normative boundaries or mother at the social margins.

Mothering with multiple marginalizations comes with the risk of criminalization for violating the law and/or offending social-cultural codes. Like the cover image of an abandoned shack in the middle of nowhere, mothers who find themselves subject to criminalization are placed in the space of "Other," puzzlingly unseen, but hyper-visible. We conceptualize "criminalizing mothering" as the complex process of scrutiny, surveillance and social sanction characterized by perceiving some mothering as criminal, and through legal and extra-legal practices (formal and informal regulation) treating some women as deviant, dependent, and/or dangerous mothers, which undermines mothers' authority and authenticity. Discourses and practices of maternal criminalization are part of a wider disturbing trend Meda Chesney-Lind and Michele Eliason call the "demonization of marginalized women and girls".

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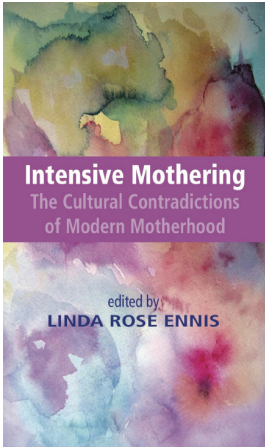*Recently Released*

Intensive Mothering: The Cultural Contradictions of Modern Motherhood
Edited by Linda Rose Ennis

To celebrate the twentieth anniversary of Sharon Hays' landmark book, *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*, this collection will revisit Hays' concept of "intensive mothering" as a continuing, yet controversial representation of modern motherhood. In Hays' original work, she spoke of "intensive mothering" as primarily being conducted by mothers, centered on children's needs with methods informed by experts, which are labour-intensive and costly simply because children are entitled to this maternal investment. While respecting the important need for connection between mother and baby that is prevalent in the teachings of Attachment Theory, this collection raises into question whether an over-investment of mothers in their children's lives is as effective a mode of parenting, as being conveyed by representations of modern motherhood. In a world where independence is encouraged, why are we still engaging in "intensive motherhood?"

"This volume revisits Sharon Hay's groundbreaking work to productively re-examine her contributions in light of changing cultural discourse about motherhood in 21st century Western cultures. Focusing on a breadth of topics by examining the complexities of motherhood from various perspectives, *Intensive Mothering* demonstrates with keen insight how this ideology has been reinforced, revised, and challenged in relation to women's evolving relationships to work and family. The volume also adds nuance to the field of motherhood studies by accounting for how consumerism and capitalism have complicated expectations and identities of motherhood and mothering in the last two decades."
—JenniFer L. Borda, Associate Professor of Communication, The University of New Hampshire

"Without question this topic is highly significant and important. Given the predominance of intensive mothering ideology defining 'good motherhood' in North America, it is absolutely crucial to critique and assess what this means for mothers, children, families and North American society." —Melinda Vandenbeld Giles, Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto, Editor, *Mothering in the Age of Neoliberalism*

"In this text, Dr. Linda Ennis has compiled a thorough and thought-provoking array of articles examining how the dictates of intensive mothering have become the predominant ideology disciplining contemporary mothers. This text is a must read for anyone wishing to gain a more in-depth understanding of the emotional, physical, financial, and psychological consequences of mothering intensively by both the individual and Western society at large."
—Tanja Tudhope, Producer and Maternal Scholar

December 2014
343 pages $34.95
ISBN 978-1-927335-90-1

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Recently Released

Patricia Hill Collins: Reconceiving Motherhood
Edited by Kaila Adia Story

Patricia Hill Collins has given new meaning to the institution of motherhood throughout her publishing career. Introducing scholars to new conceptions, such as, "other-mothering" and "mothering of mind," Collins through her creative and multifaceted analysis of the institution of motherhood, has in a large sense, reconceived what it means to be a mother in a national and transnational context. By connecting motherhood as an institution to manifestations of empire, racism, classism, and hetero-normativity, Collins has informed and invented new understandings of the institution as a whole. This anthology explores the impact/influence/ and/or importance of Patricia Hill Collins on motherhood research, adding to the existing literature on Motherhood and the conceptions of Family. In addition, this collection raises critical questions about the social and cultural meanings of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and mothering.

"This volume provides a broadly contextualized treatment of Patricia Hill Collins' work focusing on black women and motherhood within a range of discourses including its use as a theoretical reflective lens, as a pedagogical tool, and as a construct for critical inquiry on the personal, academic and socio-political levels. By bringing Collins' voice literally to the text with an interview between she and the author, the book allows the reader to gain even richer meaning from her seminal works, as well as to spark further inquiry and exploration on the intersectionality of race, gender and motherhood "
—Karen T. Craddock, PhD, Faculty, Jean Baker Miller Training Institute | Wellesley Centers for Women

"The contributors to this volume bring sustained scholarly attention to the multiple ways in which Patricia Hill Collins unmasks oppressive ideologies of motherhood and reveals the creative and revolutionary practices of Black mothering. By assembling these voices together, Kaila Adia Story reminds us of the significance, scope, and relevance of Collins' work for our understanding of how race, class, and sexuality inflect how motherhood is conceptualized, enforced, and practiced in the U.S."
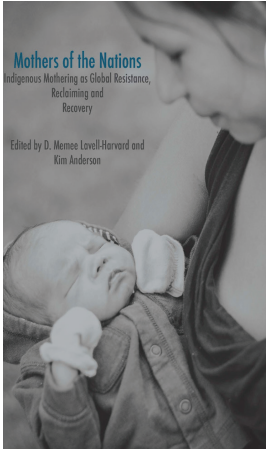—Heather Hewett, Associate Professor of English and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, SUNY New Paltz

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Recently Released

October 2014
Mothers of the Nations: Indigenous Mothering as Global Resistance, Reclaiming and Recovery
Edited by Dawn Memee Lavell-Harvard and Kim Anderson

The voices of Indigenous women world-wide have long been silenced by colonial oppression and institutions of patriarchal dominance. Recent generations of powerful Indigenous women have begun speaking out so that their positions of respect within their families and communities might be reclaimed. The book explores issues surrounding and impacting Indigenous mothering, family and community in a variety of contexts internationally. The book addresses diverse subjects, including child welfare, Indigenous mothering in curriculum, mothers and traditional foods, intergenerational mothering in the wake of residential schooling, mothering and HIV, urban Indigenous mothering, mothers working the sex trade, adoptive and other mothers, Indigenous midwifery, and more. In addressing these diverse subjects and peoples living in North America, Central America, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Philippines and Oceania, the authors provide a forum to understand the shared interests of Indigenous women across the globe.

October 2014
309 pages $39.95
ISBN 978-1-927335-45-1

Mothers of the Nations, edited by Kim Anderson and Dawn Memee Lavell-Harvard is wonderfully written and captures your attention from start to finish. The stories that Drs. Anderson and Lavell-Harvard weave together from around the world are poignant, inspiring, perhaps most importantly, timely. Indigenous women, in particular, are reclaiming their indigeneity - many through birthing and mothering practices. This book is extremely diverse and will speak to readers on many levels. I highly recommend it not only for students but for anyone who is interested in understanding what decolonization looks like for Indigenous women, our families and communities.
—Carrie Bourassa, PhD, Professor, Indigenous Health Studies, Department of Indigenous Education, Health and Social Work, First Nations University of Canada

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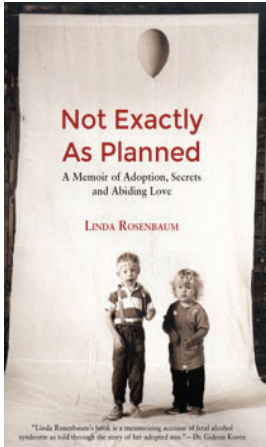please email info@demeterpress.org

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Recently Released

Not Exactly As Planned
A Memoir of Adoption, Secrets and Abiding Love
by Linda Rosenbaum

**"People often said, 'I don't know how you did it.'
As if I had any options."**

Not Exactly As Planned is a captivating, deeply moving account of adoption and the unexpected challenges of raising a child with fetal alcohol syndrome. Linda Rosenbaum's life takes a major turn when her son, adopted at birth, is diagnosed with irreversible brain damage. With love, hope and all the medical knowledge she can accumulate, she sets out to change his prognosis and live with as much joy as she can while struggling to accept her new reality.

Not Exactly As Planned is more than a story of motherlove. It's about birdwatching, bar mitzvahs, the collision of '60's ideals with the real world, family secrets and woodcarving.

"*Not Exactly As Planned* is a powerful story filled with a wisdom and humility that can teach us all something about family, life and love. Despite the difficulties raising her adopted son with FASD, Rosenbaum's book is filled with a zestful happiness that will touch everyone who reads it. I couldn't put it down."

—**Bonnie Buxton**, co-founder of FASworld and author of *Damaged Angels*

"Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder is the most common cause of developmental disability in North America. Linda Rosenbaum's book is a mesmerizing personal account of this epidemic. Her unique ability to capture the powerful effects of FASD and deliver it as a stellar narrative makes it 'a must read.'"

—**Dr. Gideon Koren**, director of the Motherisk Program, the Hospital for Sick Children and the University of Toronto

"Rosenbaum beautifully captures the joys and the challenges of being fully present, being fully Jewish, and being a global citizen of this crazy world, all with humour, depth and insight."

—**Rabbi Elyse Goldstein**, City Shul, Toronto, and author of *New Jewish Feminism*

Linda Rosenbaum lives on Toronto Island where she raised her family. She is a writer, has worked in TV and on documentary films, and advocates for children with special needs. Her story about her son, "Wolf Howling at Moon," won the 2013 Canada Writes Readers Choice award for creative-non-fiction. lindarosenbaum.com

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Important note: MIRCI membership is for the calendar year and must be renewed annually in January.

The Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement (MIRCI) (formerly the Association for Research on Mothering) is the first activist and scholarly organization devoted specifically to the topic of mothering-motherhood. MIRCI is an association for scholars, writers, activists, professionals, agencies, policy makers, educators, parents, and artists. Our mandate is to provide a forum for the discussion and dissemination of feminist, academic, and community grassroots research, theory, and praxis on mothering-motherhood. We are committed, in both membership and research, to the inclusion of *all* mothers: First Nations, immigrant and refugee mothers, working-class mothers, lesbian mothers, mothers with disabilities, mothers of colour, and mothers from other marginalized communities. We welcome memberships to MIRCI and submissions to the *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement* (formerly the *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering),* our biannual publication, from all individuals.

This special issue on "Communicating Motherhood/Mothers Communicating in Popular Culture and Social Media" features eleven articles, eleven book reviews, and a special poetry folio featuring the work of Kirun Kapur. Articles include:

•Mommy bloggers as rebels and community builders
•Mediating motherhood and celebrity in popular media
•Mommy blogging and deliberative dialogical ethics
•Imag(in)ing motherood on Pinterest
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•Women, health, agency and maternity in the film, *What to Expect When You're Expecting*
•Birth stories as performance and counter performance across dueling media platforms
•A qualitative analysis of motherhood in advertising
•and many more!

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