

The Missing Mother: How Can Art Works of and on Maternity Transcend Their Own Audience?

Volume 1

Ph.D. by Thesis and
Practice In Art

University of Reading

Department of Art,
School of Arts and
Communication Design

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Volume 2 (Mirror)

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Declaration of Original Authorship

I confirm that this is my own work and the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.

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Abstract: The Missing Mother

This Ph.D. encompasses three components: a thesis made up of two volumes, a subjective rant titled *The Missing Mother*, (Volume 1) with supporting document (Volume 2) and a body of work titled *Usually she is disappointed*. The thesis identifies the mother as missing from the canon that is feminism and art history, traced through the anthologies, conferences, and group exhibitions dedicated to feminism and art. Where maternity is included, Mary Kelly and *Post-Partum Document* dominate. Due to the exclusion of maternal art not only from what is considered to be the art and feminist canon, art and writing on maternity operates in spaces and initiatives dedicated to the subject, a form of feminist separatism by default. In the contemporary art world of exhibitions, writing, critique, in commercial and publicly funded art contexts, maternal art must seek its own opportunities, as maternity rarely features in mainstream contemporary art spaces. I ask how the art on and of maternity might transcend its own audience, formed and exhibited in the spaces dedicated to maternity only. Through research and practice I explore the absence of the mother from feminism and art history, asking how contemporary art on maternity, and maternal experiences might integrate with other genres to gain entry to the conventional spaces of art practice and writing. Considering the social (O'Reilly), psychic (Irigaray), and symbolic (Muraro), order of the mother, the *Missing Mother thesis* and artworks of *Usually she is disappointed* are interconnected as writing became a form of practice. I challenge established forms of art on maternity moving beyond body-centric essentially determinate art where the maternal experience is explicit in the work, to adopt activist, social, and political manifestations. I make reference to and problematise the patriarchal nature of language to refigure the mother as a political and social experience, one suppressed by a neoliberalism that isolates mothers socially, creatively, and intellectually. Writing and practice experiment with language, formed into angry rants. The art works employ styles derived from the former feminist revolutionary aesthetics of second wave feminist practices of the 1970s.

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This Thesis is dedicated to Mary Gerard and Cecilie Mullaney.

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Chapter 1. *The Missing Mother* – Page 14

Investigates the Missing Mother from the canon, that is feminism and art history from 1970-2000. It questions why feminist art criticism and academic theory has forgotten or neglected the mother. Research was undertaken in anthologies for feminist writing, group exhibitions of feminist art, conferences and other discursive events under the banner of feminism.

Art work: *The Missing Mother* is an installation of over two hundred images generated from the research undertaken for this Ph.D. Images were made on my iPhone and generated at night after my child was in bed.

Chapter 2. *Seminal Works* – Page 34

Following on from chapter 1, I question why *The Mother* is seemingly unattractive both in feminism and the wider world of academia and art. I look towards language as the basis of knowledge and understanding, a form of sublimation where meaning is already established, in this case the rule of patriarchal law as enshrined in feminism also. This thesis does not investigate linguistic theory nor does it attempt to address intellectual capabilities of women in relation to the definition of the feminine. It is reactionary, revolutionary, and contrary in that it looks for its own language and forms of writing that give a voice to the maternal. One that at times references anecdote but is confrontational. I draw on Kristeva, Cixous and Irigaray and their critique of language as patrilineal usurping the mother from the very core of understanding.

Artwork: A slide show comprising images for a collection of work I made throughout this period of research, including domesticity and seemingly random landscapes, all connected to my personal journey of endless house moves and child rearing. I reference John Baldessari and his work *Wrong*, in which he produced a series of

technically inferior photographs displayed in frames with the word ‘wrong’ in black text under the image. I was making *Seminal Works*. Seminal here is problematic.

Chapter 3. Post Partum Disappointments, Red – Page 42

This chapter looks at the matricidal nature of western culture. I look at Luisa Muraro’s critique of the symbolic order of the mother as set out in Lacan’s Schema, and question why it is that despite her ability to make new life, she is not revered for her procreative abilities. I posit situations where the mother artist is denigrated by mother artists and artists without children as in the case of Phillida Barlow and Tracy Emin.

Artwork: A slide projection of twenty five slides of image and text, in black and shades of red. Images were mostly generated from David Attenborough’s *Dynasties* series for the BBC. Text is in the form of concrete poetry, generated from lived experience; language is used as a provocation, and profanities feature to further unsettle the viewer. It is angry.

Chapter 4. The Good Object – Page 58

Borrows its title from Melanie Klein and her theories on loneliness¹. The good object relates to mother child experience, in this case the object being the breast and the bond between mother and child. Where this connection does not exist or is broken (not confined to breast feeding) the child risks the detrimental effects of loneliness in later life. Chapter 4 draws analogies between the missing mother in psychoanalysis and the Missing Mother in feminism and art history.

Artwork: Architectural drawing for an installation yet to be realised. The installation is envisaged as a sound recording booth capable of accommodating mother and child.

¹ Klein, Melanie, *The Writings of Melanie Klein, Vol. 3: Envy and Gratitude and Other Works 1946-1963*, London: Karnac, 1993.

Chapter 5. She will never be a ballet dancer – Page 68

Address maternal embarrassment and the aging woman. In the Rant I list a series of art world maternal humiliations, where I felt infantilised by gallery staff. I draw on Zoe Moss' essay 'It Hurts to be Alive and Obsolete', where Moss feels her age and her maternity contributed to her perceived demise by co-workers and potential lovers. Motherhood and the aging women are seen as unattractive; I make similar comparisons in relation to my motherhood and being an artist in London from 2008 to 2014.

Artwork: A performance piece recorded on video for the exhibition *Usually she is disappointed* at Pineapple Black. In one take, without rehearsal, I sing an entire album of songs by the pop artist Sia. The work shows a bald, middle-aged woman dressed in black wearing earphones and reading lyrics from her phone. She is untrained, unrehearsed and unprepared for the event.

Chapter 6. Usually she is disappointed, Matka – Page 80

Questions works of art on maternity and asks how one might make a work of art on maternity that transcends its own audience. I refer to The Hackney Flashers and their campaign *Who's Holding The Baby?* as an artwork on maternal struggle, one that comes out of art activism and social injustice. A work that at the time of its making was not regarded as a potent work of art. *Who's Holding The Baby?* was made at the same time as Mary Kelly's *Post-Partum Document*. But where Kelly enjoyed fame and notoriety with *Post-Partum Document*, The Hackney Flashers and *Who's Holding The Baby?* did not. I also look at art projects and groups relating to maternity since the first meetings of *Enemies of Good Art* in 2009.

Artwork: A site specific artwork for Artwall Gallery, Prague. Five large scale works of photographic representation of the mother with the word Mother and Matka (Czech for mother). Images include representations of The Virgin Mary, Beyoncé, Kate Middleton, Catherine Opie's *Self Portrait Nursing* and an image of a headless mother holding a child found on the internet relating to The Headless Mother works of Victorian Photography. Artwall Gallery is situated on seven former communist

poster sites overlooking the city; it runs along a dual carriageway and tramline where the posters were visible to a wide audience.

Chapter 7. A Pissertation – Page 93

Is written entirely in rant form, influenced by the writing styles of Valarie Solanas and Shulamith Firestone. It is both anecdotal and angry. *A Pissertation* takes its title from Hélène Cixous, *Coming to Writing*.

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Preface

The work undertaken for this Ph.D. comes out of a need to address changes that were taken place in my work. Before this period of research my practice was medium specific, socially engaged, politically motivated and intensely subjective. After becoming a mother, I initiated the project *Enemies of Good Art*. It was a response to the need to make work beyond the boundaries of medium specificity. Initiated while my daughter was in infancy, *Enemies of Good Art* was a series of discursive events, performances and actions rooted in activism and collectivism. All of our activities, including public meetings, broadcasts on Resonance 104.4FM, and public lectures, were consciousness raising exercises, informed by second wave Italian feminism. This Ph.D. comes out of the work I started on *Enemies of Good Art*. Once we had raised the issues surrounding maternal exclusion from the art world the question for me was how to infiltrate the art world with art that spoke of maternal lived experience, and not body centric art works that dominates this field. This Ph.D. is by practice under the title *Usually she is disappointed*, where art making is informed by research, and thesis *The Missing Mother*, where writing becomes a form of practice also. Art works include performance, installation, moving image and experimental writing. I have experimented with writing, influenced by *Coming to Writing*, by Hélène Cixous, which has developed into an artwork in its own right. The separation of thesis and practice is not apparent in this Ph.D. as one is bound to the other; text, theory and lived experience are interwoven around an artwork in each chapter. I have written chapters in rant form, and others as academic texts. The artwork documented in this thesis comes from the exhibition *Usually she is disappointed*, first shown with Artwall Gallery, Prague in 2018 and Pineapple Black Gallery, Middlesbrough in 2019.

Introduction

The work in this Ph.D. in theory and practice comes from both a personal and political place, where I live the results of a particular experience, that of motherhood, as a negative social psychic and symbolic order. This presents a set of problems in feminism, neoliberal feminist politics in relation to the mother. Representations of the mother in the history of art, and depictions of the mother and child are not the concerns of this thesis. Neither are works that place the child/family at the centre of artworks, such as Guy Ben-Ner, *Stealing Beauty* 2007, *Wild Boy* 2004, *Moby Dick* 2000, works made in collaboration with his wife and children. I am also not looking at art practices where the body becomes the site of conflict or celebration in relation to childbirth, childrearing, or child nourishment, as in works made by Janine Antoni *Inhabit* 2009, Eleanor Carucci (her photographic practice engages her immediate and extended family), and Ana Casas Broda, *Kinderwunsch*, 2010.² My project looks at art and practices that engage with motherhood as contemporary art where the body, and its biological concerns are not the predominant forms of display and representation. My practice engages art and activism, aesthetics and politics. I am influenced by women's collective practices such as The Hackney Flashers 1974 – 80, in particular their work *Who's Holding The Baby*, 1978 as well as See Red Women's Workshop and their collaborative work on propaganda posters made during the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1970s. I consider Mary Kelly's *Post-Partum Document*, 1973 - 79 and question why it dominates the canon of feminist art history. I ask why it is that it is one of the relatively few art works on motherhood that has successfully transcended a feminist art audience, a work that sits comfortably within minimal, conceptual and contemporary contexts also. Other notable examples are Susan Hiller, *Ten Months*, 1977-79, and *Riddles of the Sphinx* 1977 by Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen. I critically engage with the problematics of making working around

²Bright, Susan, Stephanie Chapman, Simon Watney, and Karen Irvine. *Home Truths: Photography and Motherhood*. London, England: Art / Books, 2013.

the mother from a feminist (Andrea Rich), matricentric feminism (O'Reilly) cultural (Marina Warner), psychoanalytical (Melanie Klein after Freud, Winnicott and his theory around the good enough mother), maternal ambivalence (Roszika Parker) and an art historical investigation critiquing Griselda Pollock and the formation of the so-called canon of feminist art.

Methodology

The thesis combines anecdote and academic research, written as a rant and backed up by a mirror document referencing the research undertaken. In an attempt to answer my research question, *How Can Art Works of and Around Maternity Transcend Their own Audience*, I have produced seven works including installation, performance/video, photography and text, and exhibited the works.³ I have published a number of texts under the title *Usually she is disappointed*.⁴ I have drawn on forms of manifesto writing and acknowledge the works of Shulamith Firestone and Valarie Solanas, which I see as literary provocations. I draw on Eimear McBride, and her ground-breaking work of fiction *A Girl is a Half-formed Thing*; the text reads at a furious pace, sentences are short, where often the writer uses single words only. The relentless pace is a reflection on the life of the young woman whose character the book revolves around. Abused, raped, violated on a near daily basis, she reflects a culture decimated by strict indoctrination of Catholic mortifications, poverty and postcolonial indignities, where girls are fair game and motherhood is corrupted by patriarchy. I have been inspired by Lydia Lunch's performance 'FUCK!' and her defiant provocative performance as a younger woman playing with her audience.⁵

I have also looked towards Samuel Beckett and his plays in particular, vile in subject matter, using beautiful and disturbing prose that gives way to bleak stage settings. A contrast to the beautiful prose of poet Anne Boyer and the sharp visceral words of Dodie Bellamy in *When The Sick Rule The World*. In particular her relationship to her mother and her painful encounters of mother daughter relations while visiting

³ *Usually she is disappointed* was exhibited as seven works made during this period of research, at Pineapple Black Gallery in Middlesbrough in January 2019. *Usually she is disappointed, Matka* was exhibited by Artwall Gallery, Prague, October 2018.

⁴ See Bibliography.

⁵ Lunch, Lydia, Performance 'FUCK!' <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDvWrpXpJ8U>>, accessed on the 17/12/2019.

her home after her mother died. I acknowledge Maggie Nelson and her work *The Argonauts* where Nelson weaves pregnancy through anecdote and academic research to produce a work that gives credibility to motherhood in a manner not previously explored.

I look at language as a patriarchal construct and imagine linguistic space for the mother thinking through Cixous, Irigaray, Kristeva. I have borrowed from Jane Gallop and her work *Anecdotal Theory*, 'Preference for situated grain over abstract sublime'.⁶ Gallop's relation to what she calls occasional writing, written for particular academic events. *Anecdotal Theory* is a collection of occasional theory.

Writing this thesis comes out of a collection of creative events, relating to what Gallop calls the situated grain. The event or events that lead to making/writing. The creative process has driven the research; in turn the research has aided the execution of the work. This symbiotic nature of research and making has only really revealed itself to me through the process of this Ph.D.

⁶ Gallop, Jane, *Anecdotal Theory*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2002, p. 156.

Chapter One

The Missing Mother

The artwork *Usually she is disappointed* comprises over two hundred images, generated through social media, academic texts, and feminist fiction. To make this work I photographed the unpleasant house I was renting, wildlife documentaries, I even borrowed images from the Facebook photo collections of friends. The works do not include the words mother, motherhood, maternity, nor images of childbirth. I have also deliberately omitted images of body parts, babies and paraphernalia relating to babies and children. I do include images relating to the social and political conditions of maternity. The work contains images of contemporary and historical activism, images of second wave feminist thinkers, including Irigaray and Cixous. The word 'seminal' is repeated in various colours woven through the piece. Also woven through the text are key sentences borrowed from women writers; I have taken 'but you cannot ignore her' from Shulamith Firestone. This Firestone sentence is used in repetition: it is intended as a

Mirror

The Missing Mother¹

And what I wanted from you, Mother, was this: that in giving me life, you still remain alive.²

In search of the mother. This Ph.D comes out of a project I initiated after the birth of my daughter. *Enemies of Good Art* was a series of discursive events held in public art spaces in London and also broadcast on Resonance 104.4FM between 2009 and 2012.³ On a practical level it critiqued the institutions that made it difficult for artists with children to visit. More broadly it asked questions around the nature of art practice for the artist with children. Meetings were organised with the agreement of institutions involved and intended as provocations. I embraced rage and anger as creative tools to progress the project and hoped others

¹ Pollock, Griselda. *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories*, New York: Routledge, 1999. The term The Missing Mother is taken from the title to chapter 6, and Pollock's essay Missing Mothers: inscriptions in the feminine.

² Irigaray, L. and Wenzel, V., 1981. And The One Doesn't Stir Without The Other. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 7(1), pp.60-67.

³ For an account *Enemies of Good Art* see index 1.



Fig 1 – Mullaney, Martina. *The Missing Mother*. 2017 - 19

poignant provocation. In addition, I have included images alluding to my child, but she is not the focus of the work. I converted all of the images to monochrome, then printed in black onto coloured paper, using an office laser printer. Each image is A4, framed in a cheap black frame. The work is installed on the floor of the gallery, standing upright in both landscape and portrait orientations. The viewer is invited to walk around and through the work, always looking down on it. Paths or gaps in the installation make it possible to view most of the work, and some of the work remains frustratingly difficult to see. The

might do likewise. The work of *Enemies of Good Art* was promoted on social media as a movement: angry art mothers making visible the invisibility of the mother. At the time the project related to my own work/life situation, I made the personal political. Social, emotional and medical care was short lived and brutal.⁴ I incited other mother artists with children to air

⁴ The Galway Butcher is the obstetrician who performed an episiotomy on me during childbirth. An episiotomy is a surgical cut made to the wall of the vagina to aid delivery by widening the birth canal. Usually deep in its incision the wound can heal quickly, if done well. If not it can cause prolonged discomfort for the life of the patient.

piece is intentionally awkward to navigate and awkward to view in its entirety.

Missing, The Missing Mother.

‘And what I wanted from you, Mother, was this: that in giving me life, you still remain alive.’⁷

Original. Contribution. Looking for questions. Need answering. She is represented in her own context. Academic women don’t want her. Academic women are her. Ostracised by her own. For what she’s done. What the fuck is that all about. Not aesthetically pleasing. Was she ever. No feminist art history. Art history. Feminist art. No history of feminist maternal art. This is history. Art. And its feminist.

Went looking for her on the obvious places. Where else. Loved and lost in unequal measures. All down hill from here she thinks. Living this shit now. How could she not be cynical. Years.

their frustrations in public.⁵ We risked exposing our vulnerability to the art world where only the most professional survive.

I went looking for the mother in feminist thought, where research was carried out on the mother in the canon that is feminism and art history. I systematically went through the following publications, key texts, group exhibitions, collections of women’s art and conferences in search of the mother. I researched key terms such as mother, mothering, motherhood, maternal. In the following examples of what I consider to be significant publications in the formation of the feminist canon, my findings are that the mother is largely missing. If she is included at all, then Mary Kelly is the only artist to repeatedly referred to.

Linda Nochlin famously critiqued the canon as white, male and western in *Why have there been no great women artists?*⁶ She highlights the omission of women artists from the canon of art history, and

⁷ Irigaray, Luce, ‘*And the One Doesn’t Stir without the Other*’. Trans. by H el ene Vivienne Wenzel, *Signs* 7, no. 1 (1981): 60-67. Accessed October 18, 2020. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173507>>.

⁵ Firestone, S. et al. *Bitch Manifesto* <<https://www.jofreeman.com/joreen/bitch.htm>> accessed 09/10/20.

⁶ Nochlin, L., 1971, *Why have there been no great women artists?*, ArtNews, January,

Long time to feel alone. Enemies. Worth every ounce of energy. Not that she needed to spend it. Like the sacrificial lamb. Never worth that. Angry with the world, for now. Lord knows. On a bio high all the same. Focus her rage on her own world. Art world. Shut out. Shut up. This Bitch.

She reacted. Didn't know she needed to at the time. Angry art mothers. That's what they called themselves. Enemies of good Art. Didn't want to talk of being cut. By the Galway Butcher. Thought it would fester. It has. Didn't want to speak of the pain of defecation. Thinking she would break again. Didn't want to. Didn't want this to be about her fucking body. Wanted to shoot the fuckers who kept her out. Wanted to dismember the bastards who did this. The bastards who made her feel like shit. Institutions that expelled her. The institutions that were supposed to love her. Nurture her. The institutions that needed her. Until they thought she couldn't anymore. Until they wrote her off.

Linda spotted it long time ago. Asked a good question. Why none. Fucking Art blokes making it big time. Questioned

traces it back to the academy, where women students were regarded as little more than the muse. In a film on her life made by Nick Willing, *Paula Rego: Secrets and Stories*,⁷ Rego talks of the treatment of female students while she studied at the Slade; female students were regarded as sexual fodder for male students who would go on to be great artists. Women would marry and start families, and were therefore not worthy of serious consideration as contenders for careers in the art world. Taking Nochlin's argument that women have largely been written out of the western canon, I problematise the 'mother' in relation to the canon that has formed around feminist art. I have found that maternity as a subject in art is missing from the feminist canon, and where it is included one work is cited repeatedly, that being Mary Kelly's *Post-Partum Document*.

For the purpose of this thesis I have considered the following academic and art related activities to have contributed to the formation of the feminist canon:

⁷ Willing, Nick. "Watch Paula Rego, *Secrets & Stories* Online: Vimeo on Demand." Vimeo, 16 Mar. 2022, <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/paularegosecretsstories>.

everything. Questioned herself. Questioned the canon. Fucking canons everywhere. Not much has changed. Women doing their shit and getting some places. Mothers still battling for the shit you were talking about forty years ago. Why no great mother artists. No - art doesn't need another mum. Apparently one will do. Job done we're moving on. Western white males. Linda exposed them. The muse. Always the bridesmaid. Men teaching. Pontificating. Wanking. The problems began in art school. Her problem was that she couldn't find her. The most obvious places. What forms of collective knowledge. The usual places. Not written into the history of. Not included in the collective of. Exhibitions. Not talked about. No reviews of her if you can't find her. Stupid.

Went looking for her in art history.

Big expensive conference every year. Art historians getting together. Mind blowing shit. Went looking for her in the PDFs. Passed (typo mine) events. Shit-loads of them. Every year they getting together. Salivating over history. Not her history. Lots of talk of binary, non binary, fluidity, non-aligned. No talk of mother. She can't stop talking about the mother.

books (including anthologies) on feminist art, conferences and symposia on feminism and art in academic and art institutions, and group exhibitions of feminist art. This chapter investigates the formation of the canon as critiqued by feminism and suggests that feminism itself has fallen foul of the same conventions it opposes by canonising one artist above all others.

In major anthologies of feminist art and writing, I have found that if the mother is referenced it is mostly or solely in relation to the work of Mary Kelly, and *Post-Partum Document* in particular. Hilary Robinson acknowledged the omission of works on maternity in both anthologies of *Feminism, Art, Theory* on the grounds that 'e had to leave something out'.⁸ Subsequently, I have found omissions occur in the following

⁸ Robinson, Hilary, (ed.), *Feminism – Art – Theory, An Anthology 1968-2000*, London: Blackwell, 2006, and a second edition in 2015. During a brief conversation with Robinson at the symposium *Feminist Emergencies* at Birkbeck University of London in 2017, I questioned the omission of works on and around maternity for both editions of the anthology. Further attempts by email were made by me to discuss the grounds on which this decision was made but were not answered.

She has to talk about the mother. And neutral. Like binary. Binary and the single mother doesn't work. Solo is not a good one either. Art History again. Differencing the Canon. Are you sure. Who's Canon Griselda. Pollock guilty contributing. Problems with canons. Mary Kelly. Is this a reversal of Freud's theories around a phallogocentric order that feminism critiques. The adoration of the father. Love Mary. Head the nuclear family. Seeds of capitalism and the foundations of patriarchy. Canonisations perform the same perfunctory roles. Phallic order repeated. But in this case from feminist to fem.

contexts also: "Women only" group exhibitions of feminist art; conferences and symposia in an art context relating to feminism such as WACK!, Art and the Feminist Revolution; art historical conferences such as The Association of Art Historians yearly conferences; "Women only" art collections and archives such as The Newhall Art Collection, Murray Edwards College, University of Cambridge and The Women's Art Library, Goldsmiths University of London. This omission also exists in other fields of study including psychoanalysis and intersectionality, both of which I will return to in chapter 4.



Fig 2 – Documentary image of Linda Nochlin, Vassar College, New York 1956

Talks of the missing mother. Representations of the mother and child. Religion fucked us up. Catholic fuck up. Not up for that. Post 1970. Not interested in your representations of the mother and child. Interested in the mother. Where's the fucking mother. Why is the mother missing. The canon ignores her. Feminism has held her back. Mother. Feminism is tired of her. Feminism is not always her friend. But you cannot ignore her. Firestone. She writes in white ink. Cixous. Still angry and she shouldn't be. Thought the job was done. Thought her aunties nailed it. Second wave. Poor bitch it's only beginning.

I went in search of her in books.

She looked for her in chapters in books. She hunted for the word 'mother' in individual essays on art and feminism. She went looking for her in the indexes of key anthologies. Fem Anthologies. To her surprise She didn't locate her. Surprised and relieved. Something more to rant about. Makes her feel a little better. Still won't sleep tonight though. Not much comfort in this shit but maybe a career. Great big whacking omissions all over the place. New contribution. The term 'mother' in an art feminist context

In *Twenty Years of MAKE Magazine: Back to the Future of Women's Art* a collection of essays and exhibition reviews from the former Magazine MAKE.⁹ the word 'Mother' is not to be found in the introduction to the book. It is also not mentioned in any of the introductions to the following six sections. No reference to the maternal is mentioned in any of the essays to which I refer. My research also included a thorough search of the mother in all of the chapters of the book. In section one, most likely to include the mother in some context, *Sexuality and The Body*, not even the pregnant body is referred to, nor is the post-partum body; the body in relation to childbirth is also not included. On page 26 the word childbirth is mentioned with reference to bodily functions. Milk and placenta are listed in a notebook by Kiki Smith in connection to a show of her work at the Whitechapel Gallery. Reference to the mother is made in section 4, of the book in an essay on photography by Anna Douglas, *Childhood: A Molotov Cocktail For Our Time* in which she discusses the works of Sally Mann and others, mostly

⁹ Walsh, Maria and Mo Throp, eds. *Twenty Years of MAKE Magazine: Back to the Future of Women's Art*. United Kingdom: I.B.Tauris, 2015.

is a fucking joke. In all the big expensive bibles she's not there. She could sing this shit. But couldn't make it up. Ladies getting together to show art on ladies matters. Ladeez getting together to talk about this shit. Only ladies collected here. And art history. Nope not there neither.

More patriarchal than patriarchy. The fucking bible. Or one of them. You've not really looked at the contents of this. Beautiful and feminist in its existence. Most comprehensive collection of writings on feminisms. What's not to love. No mention of the mother in any form in the index. In either index. Two editions. Its got clout. Two fucking editions, some additions. Still no mother. Nor is the 'mother' included in any of the essays. None. Robinson herself acknowledges this as an omission. She stalked her. Formidable and beautiful. Super-brain. Contributed so much. She wanted to be her. All fucking nerves. Who the fuck is she to go up against this goddess. But she is a fucking mother and she is fucking offended. Maybe she doesn't need to be. Maybe all the 'mother art' is bad art. Maybe it's all grotesque and she should not worry. Maybe no one wanted to look at it. Least of all these great fems. Maybe

in reference to the criticism Mann received for the work she made with her children. Arguably it is not the issue of motherhood at stake but the issue of children's sexuality that is addressed. Much time is given to children in reference to pornography but not in relation to the mother-child relationship. I have not referred to the other sections here as they make no reference to the mother and her associated search terms in any form.

Research was undertaken in the Women's Art Library at Goldsmiths University of London, and the publication linked to the archives, MAKE Magazine (1983–2002). The archives of the Women's Art Library was the initiative of a group of artists in the 1980s. Its aims were to provide an opportunity for the documentation of artworks made by women artists. In an attempt to rebalance the canon of western art, the library collected documentation and ephemera relating to exhibitions by women artists regardless of subject matter, or art form. In the archives of the Women's Art Slide Library, it was found that the mother was also under-represented. In online data bases supporting the archive I found that the

they have done her a great service. Why would they conspire against her and her kind. She is you. On the grounds that it was not possible to include all subjects. Feminism is big. Are you having her on. Feminist art and its connecting theories, also. So no moma art here. Couldn't fit it in. Not good enough. From the fucking horse's beautiful intelligent strong mouth. It can't all have been that bad. Mary wasn't bad. You and your kind hailed her a s-hero. Others too. Mary is not alone. But the way you tell it. She is. When you do.

'mother' is contentious; although used in the supporting research around art production it is rarely used by artists in support of their practice, that is few artists used the term in artists' statements. For example, the following search terms, mother, maternal, motherhood, revealed that while artists listed or mentioned these terms in their research they did not add the term to their artist statements. A direct search for artists in the online catalogues using the terms mother, maternal, and motherhood resulted in relatively few



Fig 3 – Documentation of Post-Partum Document when it opened at the Ica London

MAKE, Twenty Years of Make Magazine. They wanted to make sure we never forgot. But what of omitting. But what of it. She is not here. In the introduction to the book and in each of the six chapter introductions. No mention of the mother. She's arguing that the mother is marginalised. Why have you further cut her off/out? Once. Index of the book. Title of an artwork '*Mother and a Whore*'. Photographer Diane Baylis. 'Children'. Gets five mentions. 'Pregnant' and 'maternal' get no mentions. None. A book in six sections. Dedicated to the magazine of the same name. Nineteen years in publication. One. One issue. One. looks at the maternal as a point of departure. No mention of the mother mind. Couldn't put her on the cover. She is coming back to this.

Jones not doing us any favours either. Jones a mama herself. She does not get it. Are you not one of the greats. Have you not written for her. Have you not contributed to some ass kicking words that give the rest a fucking voice. Have you not written on the body. You Have. Good Job. Everybody except hers. Her body was of no interest to you though. Was it. She's not bitchin here. You're on her side

returns. Using the same search terms in the wider context of the archives produced considerably more results.

Research carried out on the artworks in the collection of documentation of art works and art exhibitions resulted in one box the archivist thought 'might relate to the mother in some way'. This is not conclusive – more research of the objects in the collection should be carried out here. Interestingly, documentation of Mary Kelly's *Post-Partum Document* is not included in the archives.

Research carried out in the archives of MAKE Magazine has uncovered that only one issue of the ninety published during its nineteen years in production was dedicated to the 'mother'. Published as a special issue on the mother, the word mother is not included in the title of the issue or on the front or back covers. Althea Greenan, the archivist and librarian of the MAKE archive, recounts that at the time the editors felt it would be off-putting to their readership and therefore could affect sales.¹⁰ That the

¹⁰ Conversation 15/12/2015 with Althea Greenan, Archivist, Women's Art Library, Goldsmiths University of London.

remember. She is looking to you for answers. The sisterhood. Don't kill their own. Omitting is a whole other ball game.

Is she taking this way too personally. She met you. Teaching in an all fem department. You rock. And then this. Essay: An 'Other' History: Feminist Art in Britain since 1970. A potted history of feminist art in Britain. She says "it exploded onto the British art and film scenes in the early 1970s, driven by concerns of increasing class divisions in British society". She says: Laura Mulvey, Mary Kelly, Lisa Tickner, and Griselda Pollock. Protagonists in the development. Feminist art, aesthetic, theory, out of the Women's Liberation Movement. Confined to the tight analysis of 1970s academic psychoanalytic theory. Right. All fuelled by Kelly, Mulvey, and Pollock. Jones finds feminism (or the history of feminism from the time) to be 'narrow' and 'exclusive'. Omitting. But not deliberately excluding artists. Situated in a white middleclass demographic. What of the working class. Mothers. The bones of the canon. They didn't want it. Jones is for the most part referring to the history of feminist art. Looking at art

mother is 'off-putting' is at the core of this research project.

In the book *Feminisms Is Still Our Name: Seven Essays on Historiography and Curatorial Practices*, the terms mother, motherhood, maternal, child/ren are not listed.¹¹ The following is a summary of the essays included in the book published after the conference *Feminisms, Historiography and Curatorial Practices* 2008, where three of the main protagonists of the feminist canon, Mary Kelly, Griselda Pollock and Amelia Jones, are recorded as keynote speakers. Kelly is listed as the first contributing writer but not in relation to *Post-Partum Document*. Amelia Jones looks at feminist art from 1970-2009 and wonders what had brought about a resurgence, by younger women artists, in feminist art activities. Jones talks of the history of feminist art and how it is almost being overlooked by the western canon.

¹¹ Hedlin Hayden, Malin and Sjöholm Skrubbe, Jessica eds. *Feminisms Is Still Our Name: Seven Essays on Historiography and Curatorial Practices*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010. The book comes from the conference *Feminisms, Historiography and Curatorial Practices*, 2008, Moderna Museet Stockholm.

historians. She read it as Pollock and Robinson. Jones says myopia was unwilling. But. Capable of the same myopia. Jones says; ‘Such myopia, while hardly intentional or willed, had the unfortunate effect of downplaying, marginalising, or even repressing or erasing art practices that were messy, activist, addressed issues of labour and the concerns of working class women or immigrant women – and this aside from efforts on the part of individual artists and theorists to address class and race.’⁸

Won’t find the following terms, mother, motherhood, or maternal. No mention in the whole of the text. She talks of Mary Kelly (soon to be established as the fucking grand/god mother of this shit). Kelly in relation to the Liberation Movement. Great again. Jones does not reference the work *Post Partum Document*. If that’s not sexy enough.

She gives no examples. Here is one. *Who’s Holding The Baby*. Collective. Angry. Fucked off even. Made no difference to

⁸ Jones, A, in Slyce, John, *Contemporary Art in the United Kingdom*, Ed., by Phoebe Adler, London: Black Dog Publishing, 2013.

Suggesting a new form of feminist thinking and practice in what she refers to as *parafeminism*, might include notions of sexual difference and gender in contemporary terms, but she does not mention the mother/maternity as a cause for concern or art relating to the mother as a subject. Griselda Pollock questions liquid modernity and feminism, and the dangers of categorising feminism as a movement, destined to be killed off and forgotten. As one of the protagonists of the canon that is feminism and art history, Pollock herself risks being her own problem.

Malin Hedlin Hayden argues against women only themed shows. She acknowledges the historical necessity of grouping women together but warns of the dangers of ghettoising women in their own context. Concerns are also reflected by Jessica Sjöholm Skubbe on the feminist canon and its potential demise under a populist phallogocentric approach to the writing of history as adopted by feminists.

Is this not what feminism has done, categorised artists in relation to dominant themes? Feminism never has

them whither great fem writers included them or not. Makes a difference now. They wanted to work. Many of them never been to art fucking school. What did they know. A campaign. Political. Not art. 'This is not art, it is not art, it's pornography'. This was no fucking p-party. The house over here didn't debate it. Not much debated since. This was pure and simple need. They needed to work. They looked at others around them that needed to too. Hackney. Flashed. Activism and art making. More on that later. We still need to work.

the possibility of being resolved, nor should it; it is a constant transformative process. Lolita Jablonskiene questions what a contemporary feminist exhibition might need to consider in the context of the former eastern block countries and western post-colonial theories. Renee Baert also addresses the problematics of historiographies of feminist art and feminist art exhibitions. The book claims to reflect current thinking in feminist art writing and curatorial practices. While Pollock, Sjöholm -Skubbe and Hedlin-Hayden reflect on the dangers of



Fig 4 – The Hackney Flashers Collective, *Who's Holding The Baby*, 1978

I went looking for her in the archive. Of course she did, stupid. She's got to be there. She is hoping she's not. Make her a clever dick too. Dick. Just need to learn

collective history of and by a subject, and the risks of staying in the confines of that subject, they also propel the problem by organising and contributing to the

the fucking lingo now. Bought all the fucking word explaining books. She loves the meaning of words. Had to leave school. A disaster. Should have had half a family. Should have had an education. Fucking worship her. She's interested... I think. Lives vicariously - or used to. Don't know any more. Back to the archives. Bingo. She's not fucking here. Nine Teen years of productions. One effort. B! I! N! G! fucking GO! Couldn't use the word she said. Why the fuck not I said. She said they wouldn't buy it. She said, serious. Naïve fuck. Good looking word that, Naïve. Nope. They talked about her in disguise. Had to. Not attractive. Not interesting enough. No clever theories, yet. Well fucking done there. Hidden again. Silenced.

An archive of documentation. All works by women. They were not just fed up back then, they were militant. They were being written out. Not even written in. Linda wasn't bull-shitting. Linda surprised herself. She did too when she started on this particular adventure. All disappointment, death, obliteration, obsolescence, silence. Holy fuck she may turn to Jesus yet. Linda and her crew didn't. White males cocks doing well.

discursive event and subsequent publication that bring this collection of women feminist thinkers together.

The following is a review of the texts included in the exhibition catalogue *WACK!: Art and the Feminist Revolution*.¹²

Included in this review is a breakdown of the key texts included in the book. The mother, motherhood and maternal do not feature in the index. Of the eighteen sections of the exhibition, one section is dedicated to 'Family Stories' and makes no reference to the mother. Of the one hundred and twenty artists included in the show, only nine works refer to the mother or representations of her. A small number of artists included in the exhibition catalogue touch on the subject of motherhood, the most obvious being Mary Kelly's *Post-Partum Document* and Susan Hiller's *Ten Months*. Motherhood is referred to in Valie Export's film *Invisible Adversaries* (1977) with an image of a baby in a fridge and presumably the mother

¹² Butler, Cornelia H. and Lisa Gabrielle Mark, eds. *WACK!: Art and the Feminist Revolution*. This publication accompanies the exhibition by the same name presented at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 4 March – 16 July 2007. Cambridge, MA: Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 2007.

Those fuckers on their thrones. Getting them off was going to be war. Women, art a revolt. And revolt they did. Linda knew who the enemy was. Traced it back and back. No fucking clue who she is revolting against. Now. From her kitchen table after dark. Surely this is not civil war. She does not want to fight them. Why the fuck would she. She want to be with her sisters. Grow old with her sisters. Love every fucking one of them till she pops her fucking clogs. With her sisters. Getting off on this. Cumming.

Went looking for her in the collection.

Women only art bought here. Women only college. Best in the world. Great. Not here either. Why. No clue. She said it surprised her. Hadn't thought to look for her more. Mary is here tho'. Big expensive slick Mary's. Job fucking done again. Probably. End of. Have no more to say on this. What's the point?

Searched for her in the gallery.

With the same hopeful intent. Feminist curators won't leave her out. Kids in the play ground. But they fucking did. Big ones too. Not that long ago either. Another seminal collective experience. Resurgence in the subject they told us.

looking in, but that is all. That such a key exhibition that claimed to be a reassessment of feminist art gave such scant attention to this subject demonstrates a disregard for the subject, rendering the mother invisible in this context.



Fig 24 – Export, Value. Still from *Invisible Adversaries*, 1976

Peggy Phelan, intentionally or otherwise, misses an opportunity to talk about maternal concerns with a mention of Mary Kelly in relation to Laura Mulvey's film *Riddles of the Sphinx*, noting that some elements of *Post-Partum Document* were included in the film as "an important feminist work".¹³ She does not say why

¹³ Mulvey, Laura, and Peter Wollen. *Riddles of The Sphinx*. Docuseek, <https://docuseek2.com/wm-rots>.

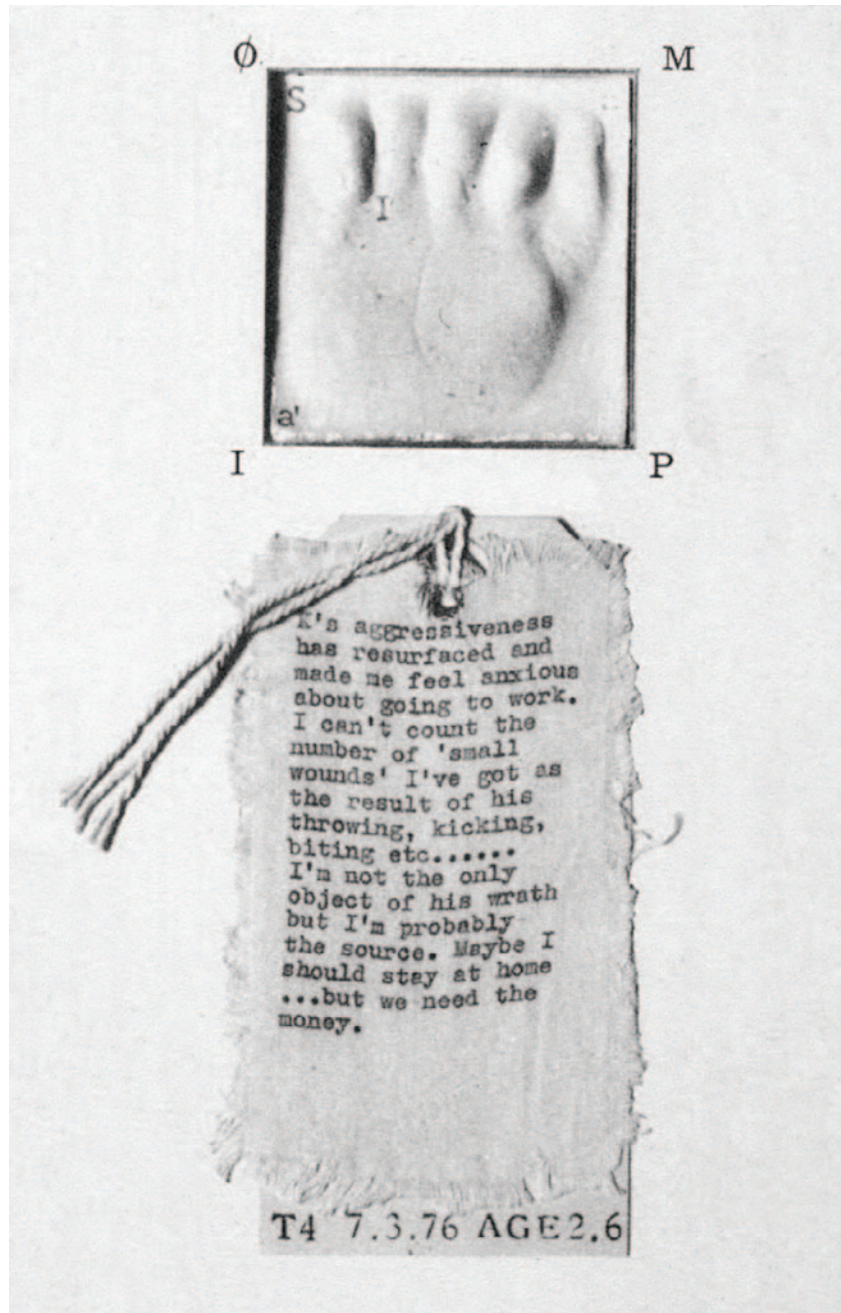


Fig 5 – Kelly, Mary. *Post-Partum Document*, 1973-79

Great. The show to end all shows. Fucking great. The biggest yet, have you seen the catalogue. Its fucking great. Massive. So many fem artists. So much work. No longer ignored and hidden. Women do it for themselves. No fucking mothers

Post-Partum Document is an important work, or indeed what the work is about. *Riddles of the Sphinx* is steeped in maternal conflict closely connected to the struggles of second wave feminist activism and the demands for equal pay and the

mind. More lip service to the family. Squeezed in before the end. She does not want to feel like this all the time. Slow down. Don't want to be disappointed. Cos' usually she is disappointed. Will call them out. Will she. Risk total obliteration. Wack! Indeed.

Her sisters canonised her. They said there was a problem with it. But they did it anyway. Catholic. It was too easy. She behaved like they wanted her to. They let her in. Her sisters got off on it. They were like them too. Beat them at their own game. Good for Mary. Bad for every other Mary. They were beating no one. Only their own kind. They joined the other team. No reclaiming anything here. The gaze was not her concern. Enter the academy. Learn it. Get good at it. Learn the lingo/make art like them. Minimal.

Fuck the home fires. (Maintenance manifesto) Not sexy.

lack of affordable childcare. Phelan looks at artists in relation to the canon of feminist performance art for the 1970s: radical, naked (some), bloody and defiant. It is a comprehensive survey of work from the period, with direct reference to sexism in the art world, the male gaze and women artists reclaiming of the gaze. She makes no reference to maternity and art works derived from maternal experiences.

Marsha Meskimmon sets out an alternative view of 1970s feminism as a global movement, one that worked against the perceived cannon that is the Anglo-American perspective. Meskimmon advocates for a francophone feminist perspective while addressing the importance and spread of feminism in the Anglophone world. Australian feminism is not a derivative of Anglo-American feminism but has its own valid position. She draws on its position to America in geographic terms and its relationship to indigenous peoples as a formally European settler in an Asian-Pacific geography, yet she does not focus on the mother. More importantly she writes of the established feminist canon as being the preserve of the few. So what was this the case? Why did this emerging feminist

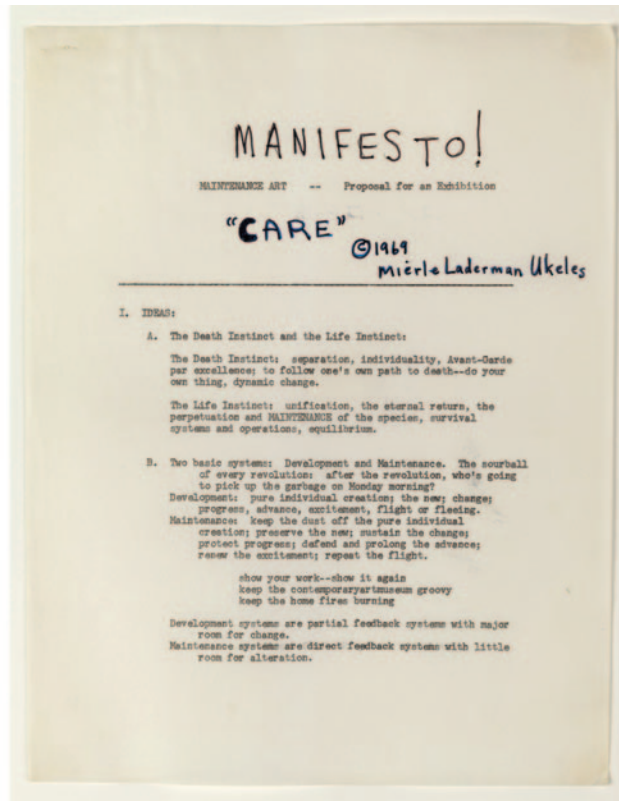


Fig 6 – Laderman Ukeles, Merle. *Manifesto for Maintenance Art 1969!*,
Proposal for an exhibition 'Care, 1969

What ever happened to Rosler’s nappies. She didn’t talk about what’s between her legs. She went for the head. Clever. Diagrams of his teaching. The mirror stage. Big words like oedipal. So over it. Lacan is her god now. Muraro again. Love the mother. They couldn’t argue with her, too smart for them. The art looked fucking good ‘tho and she knew it. Still does. It spoke to them and us. Way to fucking go Mary. She broke moulds and remade others. She should have enabled others to follow in her shoes. She didn’t. They killed it. They

canon ignore maternity? Feminism adopting the limitations of canon forming, limitations that Linda Nochlin had already drawn attention to in *Why have there been no great women artists?*. While canon forming continues to be problematic, for the purpose of this thesis, I maintain that maternity as a subject is systematically left out.

While the Women’s Movement was well underway, a ‘feminist’ art had not been established, what was to be considered feminist was still very much up for

killed the mother. Again. Worshipped one to the detriment of all others. Don't want your milky tits, torn vagina, butchered bellies or you fucking babies. We've gone all psycho. Holy Mary.

debate.¹⁴ Establishing a feminist aesthetic unapologetically was a paradigm shift that

¹⁴ Lippard Lucy R. *From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women's Art*. New York: Plume Books, 1976.



Fig 7 – Rosler, Martha. *Diaper Pattern*, 1973

Queer milk. Clever. We didn't want to use the obvious she said. Dressed it up they did. Two clever fucks. She said they didn't want to talk about the 'mother'. What do you want to talk about then. Another body part. Reduced to milky tits again. She already wrote the fucking book on it. An interruption she called. Fucking interruption are you having me on. Another great feminist event. Be a fucking fem, don't be a fucking mother fem. Emergencies they called it. Red fucking lights all over the place. We're going to take it down. Like our sisters did before us. Many of them at this shindig. Got recognition now. They worked for it. Expensive natural fabrics, adorned. The intelligentsia now. Dropped their power in the academe. Outside of those hallowed walls no one gives a fuck, much. Why is she the only mother fem howling here. She knows why. Want to transcend herself remember. Want a life. This is changing nothing. Getting her hot and bothered for a day won't do.

Lucy Lippard believed had to happen. Lippard, recognising her feminist awakening after the birth of her son, had the realisation that women were very much on the back burner of the established male dominated art machine that comprised the art world of the of the late 70s when she wrote *From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women's Art*. While she recognised the radical feminist in her, she concluded that the hierarchies of the established patriarchal superstructure (hooks), could not be crushed, and that the revolution would not happen. She argued that change would take place slowly but only if everyone concerned pulled their collective weight. Her solution, which was not without its problems, was to adopt a separatist strategy for survival or rather the establishment of a strong feminist art and potentially art stars. Lippard admitted that this had the potential to become inward looking and confined within its own parameters. Better than nothing, she reassured the reader, that any 'strong woman artist can emerge from a feminist community'. Except in the case of the maternal artist, where the academic feminist community has largely excluded her and by default has also written her out of the history of feminist art.

Chapter Two

Seminal Works

Seminal Works comprises photographic images combined with the word ‘seminal’. Innocuous photographic images of no particular consideration towards content or subject matter. Photographic opportunities I stumbled across daily. Not necessarily inconsequential, as I unconsciously search for the punctum, the astute visual spark in the work, the visual hook that seduces. *Seminal Works* objects to ‘seminal’ as a term of reference. In *Seminal Works* I declare myself a seminist. I am making seminist art. This is Seminism. A neologism. A provocation, an abjection, a play on words that is more than semantics. *Seminal Works* references John Baldessari’s *Wrong*. *Seminal Works* is an affront to the ideas of genius and accolades in praise of greatness. *Seminal Works* is a slight on the myth of the lone male white genius. John Baldessari was a genius. *Seminal Works* acknowledges the omission of women from writing. This is the work of a seminal feminist, perhaps a feminal seminist. The seminist is playful, she has humour, she gives no fucks.

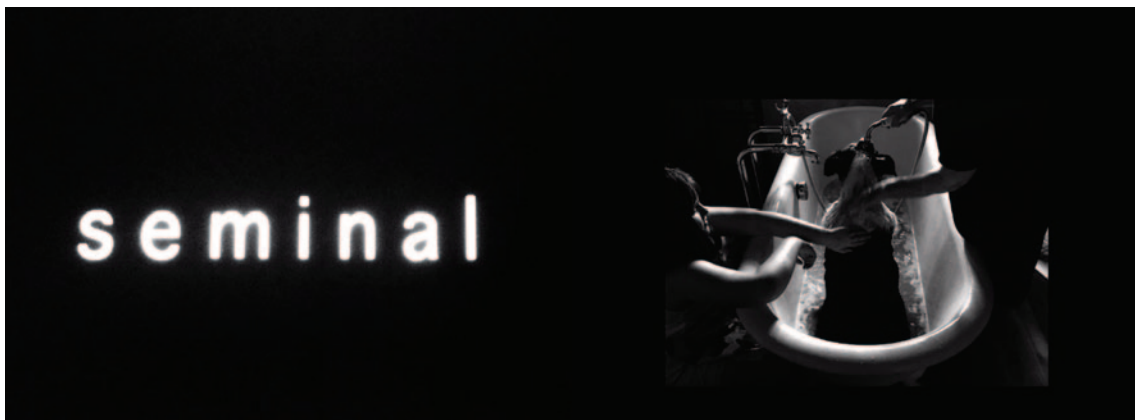


Fig 8 – Mullaney, Martina. *Seminal Works*. 2019

‘You can desire. You can read, adore, be invaded. But writing is not granted to you. Writing is reserved for the chosen. It surely took place in a realm inaccessible to the small, to the humble, to women. In the intimacy of the sacred. Writing spoke to its

prophets from a burning bush. But it must have been decided that bushes wouldn't dialogue with women.⁹

Seminal.

The word seminal does not appear in *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*.¹⁰ In the dictionary Etymology is defined as the 'origin, formation and dictionary development of a word. Literal sense of a word, original form, primary or basic word'. Etymological. Etymologist. *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* traces the formation of language back to the fourteenth century. Commonly used words in the English language have origins in other European and Indo-European languages. The words seminar and seminary are included, both of which derive from semen, while semantic does not.¹¹ Seminar is described as a 'group of (male) students meeting for systemic instruction'.¹² Seminary is a place of 'cultivation, production, or education' adopted into Catholicism as the place of education and training of priests. The word seminal can be found in the *Online Etymology Dictionary*, where the word is said to have derived from Latin of the late fourteenth century, *generative seminis*, or seed.¹³ The word is described as figurative sense of 'full of possibilities' and dates from the sixteenth century when seminal, seminally, seminality came into use. Semen, 'seed of male animals', is also the origin of *disseminate*. In antiquity Greek logos, divine reason 'The Stoics spoke of logos spermatikos, or seminal reason, a formative force that also imbues the male seed

⁹ Cixous, Hélène, *Coming to Writing and Other Essays*, ed. and trans. by Deborah Jenson *et al.*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991, p13.

I read the burning bush here as a reference to the burning bush in the Bible, where Moses was appointed by God to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Cixous suggests the omission of women from the Bible was a conscious act, and likens this to the continued omission of women from writing. I read Cixous as autobiographical, omission leading to lack of confidence until she experiences an epiphany of sorts that lead to self-discovery and an outpouring of writing.

¹⁰ C. T. Onions, *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

¹¹ C. T. Onions, *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*. Semantic has origins in Ancient Greek relating to signs of the weather in science. The doctrine of signs in relation to knowledge.

¹² Scholarly activity in the 14th Century was the preserve of men.

¹³ <<https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=seminal>> accessed 30/05/2019.

with an inherent power to generate form from the chaotic and yielding mass of the female'.¹⁴

Seminal Works is a visual provocation where I see the word 'seminal' as offensive, steeped in patriarchy; so deeply rooted is the word in language that even feminists use it to describe great works of art. To transform language into one that could be matriarchally informed is a paradigm shift too far. *Seminal Work* ruminates on acknowledged historic patriarchies and protests the use of 'seminal' from a contemporary feminist maternal position. 'How could sexual difference not be troubled when, in my language, it's my father who is pregnant with my mother?'¹⁵

In this work and chapter I use 'seminal' in *Seminal Work* to aggravate that word and think about others that have in their origins a connection to women, to mothers, reproduction and male power. The problematic that words are all formed through patriarchy, which contributes to the silencing of mothers, is a form of sustained and systemic subliminal messaging that forms and reforms culture. The use of the term 'seminal' contributes to the continued silencing of women, not due to a lack of voice or language on the part of the mother but in its power as a word that represents her continued defeat as a credible force. Language defeats her before she can assert herself, where language is steeped in what have become patriarchal norms. For example, the word 'bitch' is a bad woman in Old Norse, and 'bastard' is the illegitimate son of a nobleman born of a woman not his wife. Bastard comes from her, the word has associations in the word barn, or saddle being the spaces of conception in both French and German, suggesting the woman was of low life. That is, she being of a barn. The word is steeped in class distinctions. In *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* there is no reference to what a daughter born under the same circumstances might be.

¹⁴ For a critique of 'seminal' see; Lili Zarzycki, *Outrage: Architectural Review*, March 2020

¹⁵ Cixous, Hélène, *Coming to Writing*, ed. and trans. by Deborah Jenson *et al.*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991. p 23

All major discourses are traditionally the domain of men, in what Deborah Cameron calls ‘representations of official culture’, where fields of knowledge and experience connected to women, domesticity, anecdote and community have little currency.¹⁶ The word ‘seminal’ is now seminal in this context; no other word owns the power it commands with reference to acts of creativity. In contrast to its usual usage, seminal in *Seminal Work* is intended as knowing humour, a sardonic accolade on the notion of supposed greatness pertaining to creativity.¹⁷

In *The Symbolic Order of The Mother* Luisa Muraro suggests that language is sacred when women know its power.¹⁸ She suggests that language is the key to the mother/child experience, one that forms the basis of understanding in the child. It can only be passed from mother to child (or the one in her place, that is the carer) during the period of intense bonding in early infancy. The ability to return to this scared and empowering time is conditioned out of both the mother and infant. As the child proceeds through life societal interference dominates the relationship and the mother’s position in that relationship diminishes. Rendering the mother powerless under what Muraro calls patriarchal motherhood and childhood, language is no longer the beautiful force that once connected them. Without knowing it the child becomes complicit in the symbolic order of the mother that is bound up in matricide. I return to matricide in chapter 4, where I suggest psychoanalysis further reinforces western matricidal culture. ‘As a matter of fact, symbolic incompetence has repercussions at a linguistic level, causing in the female speaker an uncertainty about whether words can truly what she wants them to say.’¹⁹

¹⁶ Cameron, Deborah, (ed.), *The Feminist Critique of Language, A Reader*, London: Routledge, 2002.

¹⁷ For a good example of this see the *Masculinization of Fiction 1800-1960*, eds., Underwood, Ted; Bamman, David; Lee, *Sabrina in The Transformation of Gender in English-Language Fiction* <<http://hdl.handle.net/2142/99015>>, accessed 15/08/20.

¹⁸ See Luisa Muraro, *The Symbolic Order of the Mother*, trans. by Francesca Novello, Albany, NY: State University of New York, 2018.

¹⁹ Muraro, Luisa, *The Symbolic Order of the Mother*, trans. by Francesca Novello, Albany, NY: State University of New York, 2018, p.32.

In *Seminal Works* I reposition 'seminal' in a feminist maternal framework. By making work on and of the word, my intention is to challenge 'seminal' in feminist use. Seminal being a provocation in this context, offensive to feminism if one regards its etymology. In etymological terms the egg (female) is subordinate to the seed (male). He/She problematic, where semen (he) (se-men) is of greatness and egg (she) (s-he) is of lesser value. The word seminal is an insult to women, an assault on maternity where patriarchal feminism has largely accepted the term and adopted it.²⁰ A neoliberal feminism accommodates instead of challenging the patriarchal model neoliberal feminism panders to it, leans in, mimics it. Don't change the 'boys' at the corporate table, be better than them.²¹ So profoundly widespread is the use of the word seminal it is not possible to account for all of its usage.

Valarie Solanas declared SCUM Manifesto a literary provocation. Largely ignored throughout her life the text enjoys a revival of sorts in the current wave of feminist activities from the academy to the streets. Portrayed as the vitriolic lone figure Solanas struggled against culture and class in the pursuit of becoming a writer.²² SCUM Manifesto was largely dismissed by Solanas as a great feminist text and declared it a literary device to have her voice heard.

In 1970 *The Bitch Manifesto* by Jo Freeman, was first published in *Notes from The Second Year* edited by Shulamith Firestone and Anne Koedt.²³ Written one year after SCUM Manifesto was first published, it predates *The Dialectic of Sex* by two years and Andrea Dworkin's *Woman Hating* by six years. *The Bitch Manifesto* is unapologetic in its use of language; bitch is reformed into new meaning where bitch epitomises strong, independent, fearless women. An organisation in which Freeman offers the possibility of reclaiming the word, describing a community of bitches ready

²⁰ hooks, bell, *The Will to Change, Men, Masculinity, and Love*, New York: Washington Square Press, 2004, p. 115. hooks talks of the 'dominator model' where patriarchy is held together by women who hold traditional values in terms of how we live and function.

²¹ Sandberg, Sheryl, *Lean In, Women, Work and The Will to Lead*, London: WH Allen, 2015.

²² See Avital Ronell's Introduction in Solanas, Valerie, *SCUM Manifesto*, London: Verso, 2004.

²³ 'Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation, Major Writings of the Radical Feminists', was a feminist journal published by Shulamith Firestone and Anne Koedt, 1970.

for world domination, not dissimilar to *SCUM Manifesto* and *The Dialectic of Sex* in calling for the complete annihilation of the male sex.

In search of a paradigm shift in language I went looking for other words relating to female sexuality and their meaning as incorporated into common use. As opposed to seed, semen and seminal, the word ovary is included in *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, as oval, meaning egg shaped. Ovary, ‘female organ of reproduction’. And, ovation, (origin in ancient Rome) is described as a ‘lesser triumph’. The word ovarian does not exist in this dictionary; it is included in the *Online Etymology Dictionary* as an adjective, pertaining to an ovary or the ovaries dating from the seventeenth century. Ovary and ovarian is used by Andrea O’Reilly in protest against the term seminal, which she views as out-dated in the patriarchal structure of language. Ovarian offers opposition in claiming or forming new terminology that incorporates feminine associations. Derogatory terms have foundations in meaning associated with women, including bitch and bastard and ovary.

Genital is an ‘external generative organ’, and is non gender specific. *Genitive*, ‘pertinent to the case which expresses the possessor or source of something’. *Genius*, ‘tutelary deity or spirit, person as possessing extraordinary native intellectual power’ has no bias towards one gender over another in the dictionary. The word seed is connected to semen using offspring as an explanation, egg is aligned to ovum as in egg, where egg is a more contemporary use of ovum with origins in Old Norse. Egg also traces to the word ‘bird’ in Sanskrit and Old English. There are no derivatives of egg listed. Milk is a ‘fluid secreted by the mammæ of female mammalia’ with an Old English spelling of milc and various other variations of spelling in many other older European and Indo-European languages. There are no derivatives of the word in connection to any other meaning listed, other than the Old English term milksop, an ‘effeminate term (nickname) referring to one fed on milk’. In other words, a sissy.²⁴

²⁴ A person regarded as effeminate or cowardly, origin English, coming from sister. C.T. Onions, *Dictionary of Etymology*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1985

The writer and academic Andrea O'Reilly uses the term 'ovarian', refusing seminal.²⁵ She repeatedly uses ovarian in connection to the work of Adrienne Rich's *Of Woman Born, Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. Rich's work on maternity is commonly labelled a 'seminal' work.²⁶ Originally published in 1976, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* is regarded as the first serious writing on the subject of patriarchal motherhood. O'Reilly offers the possibility of deposing terms and words that perpetuate bias towards male greatness. Or indeed originate from a gendered position in favour of a male prerogative to knowledge and power.

Investigating certain words relating to male, female and greatness I look at literary works that question traditionally accepted forms of language, the use of certain words and the provocations of writers like Cixous, Muraro, and Jo Freeman, that require thinking on language to consider an oppositional perspective. Cixous wilfully plays with words inventing new ones. Freeman takes bitch and reclaims it as a positive, opposing its derogatory associations with femininity. 'I saw language as a substitution that gave me back my oldest and most original experience: the experience of coming to life and into the world. ... I realised that language is for me the first one in the place of the mother, and in this function I saw that language is absolutely irreplaceable.'²⁷

In *Coming to Writing* Cixous suggests that male privilege arms the male with undisputed ability to write where writing 'pours out from him'. For the woman it takes encouragement, where cosmic affinity is her reassurance; her ability to make new life is also her ability to write. Cixous pours scorn over the 'superhistoricised' male, where

²⁵ Andrea O'Reilly, Ph.D. is Professor in the School of Women's Studies at York University, Toronto and the founder of Demeter Press, an independent publishing house dedicated to writing on maternity. In 2016 she coined the term Matricentric Feminism, calling for a feminism that puts the mother at the heart of the feminist debate.

²⁶ A Google search of the terms 'Adrienne Rich Seminal' returns over 600,000 hits. Replacing seminal with ovarian returns over 800,000 returns with five relating to Andrea O'Reilly in connection to *Of Woman Born*, the rest omit ovarian or refer to ovarian cancer, twisted ovaries or ovary.

²⁷ Muraro, Luisa, *The Symbolic Order of the Mother*, trans. by Francesca Novello, Albany, NY: State University of New York, 2018, p. 64.

she creates new words offering the possibility of matriarchal contributions to language. Nannymale. Superuncle. Papaperson. Superhistoricised. Papamama. In writing this thesis I too have come to writing. In the accompanying texts of each chapter, I use language as a tool to make new work. The text is art, biography and experimental, where I have gained new confidence in my ability to harness language.

In relation to the body of work entitled *Seminal Works*, seminal is of semen (male), it leaves no space for egg (female). His Seminal supersedes Her Ovum, as her ovum is of lesser value. The seed is always male. *Seminal Works* addresses maleness, that ties notions of greatness to maleness unequivocally. It does not necessarily refer to aesthetics. In the work I critique language as inherently male, what is the solution for Cunt's sake.²⁸ 'She alone dares and wishes to know from within, where she, the outcast, has never ceased to hear the resonance of fore-language. She lets the other language speak-the language of 1,000 tongues which knows neither enclosure nor death. To life she refuses nothing. Her language does not contain, it carries; it does not hold back, it makes possible.'²⁹

The word cunt is not included in *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*.

²⁸ Cixous, Hélène, *Coming to Writing and Other Essays*, ed. and trans. by Deborah Jenson *et al.*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991, p. 34

²⁹ Cixous, Hélène, *The Laugh of the Medusa*, <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173239>>, accessed 15/08/2018.

Chapter Three

Post Partum Disappointments, Red

Post Partum Disappointments, Red was commissioned by Creative Factory Middlesbrough, for projection during an after-show party at MIMA Middlesbrough during the private view of the exhibition Liquid Crystal Display. A shocking series of awakenings I experienced after giving birth. I name them as *Post Partum Disappointments*, as played out in the home and the world of work. The work is made up of photographs generated from the David Attenborough *Dynasties* television series of family groups in the natural world. The animal world is portrayed in basic terms of survival; fucking, eating, sleeping. Each image was converted to monotone with a red cast applied to the work in Photoshop. Red text was added to each slide on the top side of the image, rather than underneath as would be the case with captions using the usual photographic conventions of explaining an image. The work first appeared in the form of daily posts on social media. The text reads as concrete poetry; profanities

Mirror

Post Partum Disappointments, Red

Andrea O'Reilly speaks of the negation of motherhood in academia, not only in academic feminism but also in the university as a whole. She speaks publicly on her frustrations of being ignored in her own institution (York University, Toronto) for the many research outputs she has contributed over her long career, including Demeter Press, founded as an academic publishing house dedicated to the mother/maternal/motherhood studies. She also notes that motherhood has 'fallen off the academic page'¹⁵. She speaks of attendees of academic conferences rolling their eyes at the mention of motherhood. O'Reilly suggests that motherhood is the 'unfinished business of feminism'.¹⁶ She makes the case for the use of the term 'matricentric' and not 'maternal' as the latter implies a relational wellbeing to the care and wellbeing of children. Matricentric, as

¹⁵ O'Reilly, Andrea, *Matricentric Feminism, Theory Activism and Practice*. Bradford, Canada: Demeter Press, 2016. p 185.

¹⁶ O'Reilly

challenge established tropes around language, its accepted patriarchal construction, and the lack of empathy for the mother. The word ‘cunt’ is deliberately overused, as an exercise in normalising it, reshaping and re-appropriating its meaning. I draw on some of the activities of *Enemies of Good Art*, where I organised groups of women to gather in publicly funded gallery spaces in London. Our intention was to critique the institutions that effectively

O’Reilly sees it as a ‘mother centred mode of feminism’¹⁷. This is akin to Muraro suggesting that we need to learn to love the mother. ‘I still hear, as I did twenty years ago at our first motherhood conference, stories from motherhood scholars about how their work has been ignored, dismissed, invalidated, or trivialised by academic feminists. I continue to hear how the women’s studies conferences that they

¹⁷ O’Reilly

Gift. Ass. Hole. Not your number. Fucked and fucking gone. Giving no shits now. Beautiful. Never over. Love. Spittin fucking image. Days. Endless days. Daze.



Fig 9 – Mullaney, Martina. *From Post Partum Disappointments*, Red, 2018

excluded us. Other post-partum disappointments took place in social and cultural settings and were equally difficult. *Enemies of Good Art* brought together women (men were invited but they seldom joined us), children were welcome but not the focus of the gathering, to talk about the nature of art practice after the family. The title *Post Partum Disappointments* acknowledges Mary Kelly's *Post-Partum Document*.

'Having given birth to two brilliantly creative daughters I plan to have my womb bronzed for presenting the world with two such gifts.'³⁰

I looked for her in the symbolic order. Not interested in images of her holding her baby. No. Not interested in her saintly attire. Not. Not interested in her goodness. No. She's only interesting when she's in pain. Fucking. Screaming. Eating. Birthing not. Taking on the State is one thing. Taking on thought is another. Taking on other women artists. Is just wrong. This battle uphill is lonely.

³⁰ Margaret Harrison's reaction to an interview by Tracey Emin, where Emin suggested motherhood was the reason Harrison was not a household name.

attend have few, if any papers, on motherhood: how motherhood is seldom a topic of discussion in women's studies classrooms and rarely included in academic feminist textbooks: and how articles on motherhood or reviews of motherhood books are all but absent in the leading women's studies journals'.¹⁸

In 2014 Tracey Emin declared you can't be a mother and an artist.¹⁹ Emin's statement coincided with her solo show at the Gagosian Gallery London. In this statement Emin declared that she could not be a great mother and a great artist. *I would have been either 100 per cent mother or 100 per cent artist. I'm not flaky and I don't compromise. Having children and being a mother... It would be a compromise to be an artist at the same time.*²⁰ She declared that to excel at one would be to

¹⁸ O'Reilly

¹⁹ The Times, John Simpson, Friday 3rd October, 2014 *You Can't be a Mother and an Artist*, <<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/you-cant-be-a-mother-and-an-artist-says-tracey-emin-m69dfqbvlpm>> accessed 10/10/20.

²⁰ The Independent, Ella Alexander, *Tracey Emin: There are good artists that have children. They are called men.* Friday 3rd October 2014 <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/tracey-emin-there-are-good-artists-have-children-they-are-called-men-9771053.html>> accessed 10/10/20.

She's an artist. Symbols are everything. Make art, make angry art. Obviously. Triple negated. bell and her black hook to start. Piper added one. Third on the rung. Black women fight. Mothers fourth. Black Mothers. Fifth. Piper angry at white men. Euro ethnic. She says the whole dirty plot is ruled by men. Black and white lassies trying to be like them. Pits us against each other. No winners in this contest. So said that if she is great you cannot be. She is right. Can't all be great. Someone has to be shit to make you a fucking god. They did that with Mary. She was great. Still is. Other, and others shite by default. Shouldn't need a term like matricentric. Women negating women. What the fucking fuck. On the streets they stood together. Or so we like to think. Maybe that space is easier. United angry mob. For a while. Context is every thing. In the academy. They, they being she's. Fucking murdered her before she got started. Invisibilised her. Not possible to intellectualise her. Too stuck on the risk of essentialising her. Had to leave something out she said. Probably easier to leave her out. She's too fucking busy. Babies dangling from vulvas and tits. We've got matricide

the detriment of the other. Emin also professed that the artist Margaret Harrison was not a household name, suggesting that while she may deserve the accolades that come with fame and notoriety, her maternity held her back. This unhelpful commentary by Emin supports the myth that Nochlin attacked in her essay *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?*, that of the lone independent artist tortured in his studio, a male preserve where only the most dedicated survive and thrive. Emin believes that children and art practice do not go together, a belief that Harrison, like Nochlin, rejects on the grounds that there are many ways to live and be an artist. Harrison also points to the women of second wave feminism who paved the way for female artists today.²¹

I use Muraro in this chapter to further illustrate how the symbolic order Lacan sets out in *The Schema L, the real, the imaginary and the symbolic*, has turned

²¹ The Independent, Margaret Harrison, *Tracey Emin is Wrong on Motherhood – Having children doesn't mean you can't be a good artist*. Sunday 5th October 2014
<<https://www.independent.co.uk/author/margaret-harrison>> accessed 28/03/19.

to deal with. Your unconscious playing
fuck with you. Held back. Ignored by her
own kind. She lost. Of activist to
academic. Feminism.

the mother into a negative entity, and in
turn how this has impacted on women.²²
In her book *The Symbolic Order of the
Mother*, Muraro talks of the silencing of

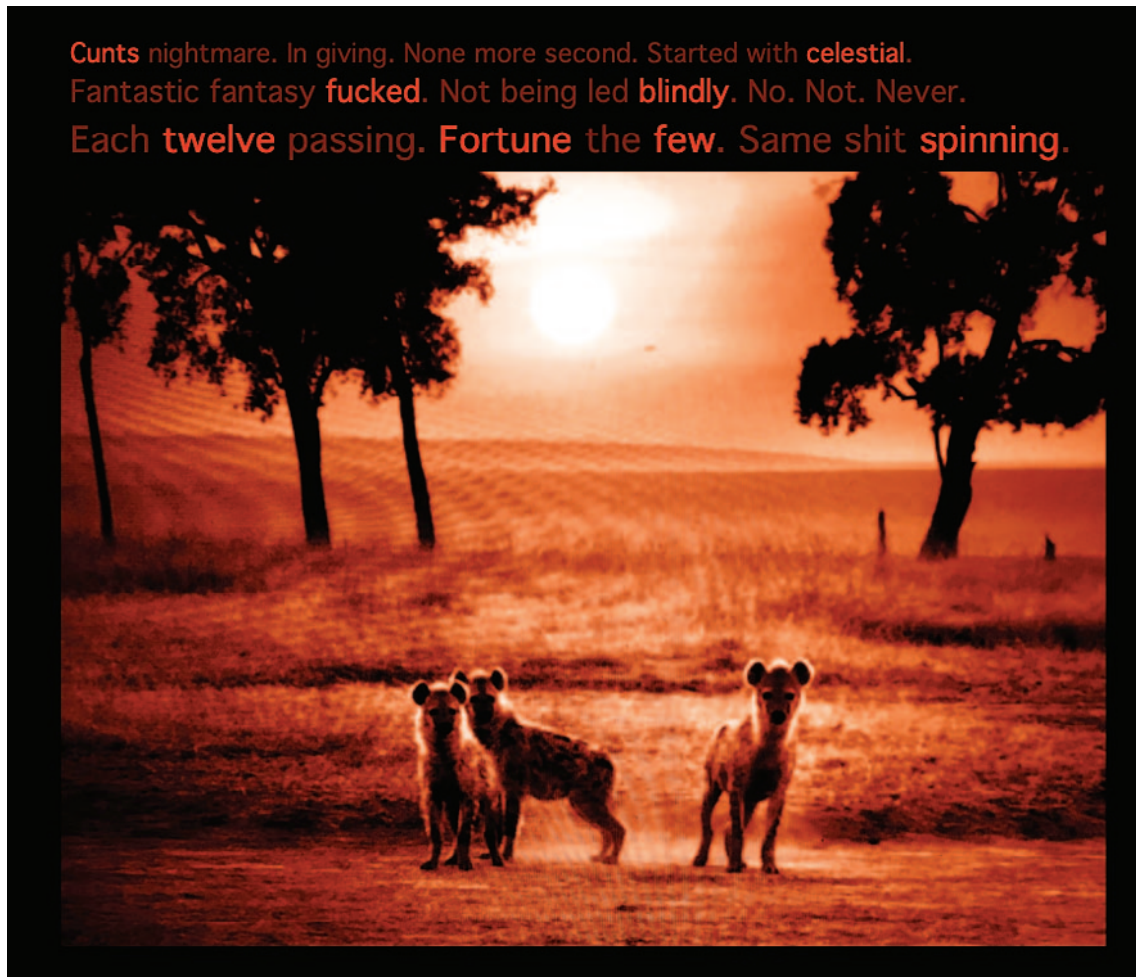


Fig 10 – Mullaney, Martina. *From Post Partum Disappointments*, Red, 2018

You called it what. Mother and babies of
preschool age only, Whitechapel
Gallery, curators talks. Monthly. Bet he
was delighted with that fucking gig. At
Ten A fucking M. Gallery opens at
eleven. Thank you, hidden again. Crib
Notes. Too loud. Too visual. Too mother.

mothers in symbolic terms.²³ She gives
the example that ‘I was born into a

²² Lacan, Jacques, *Écrits*, Trans. by Bruce Fink, New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2007.

²³ Muraro, Liusa, *The Symbolic Order of the Mother*, trans. by Francesca Novello, Albany, NY: State University of New York, 2018, p.18.

Too messy. Another fucking nuisance. But useful. Arts council boxes ticked. Can't get into the café. Too many stairs. Buggies lumpy, cumbersome, heavy, not worth it. Not wanted. Another great art experience. Kids couldn't stand it. On our feet for an hour, wriggling babies. No. I don't want fucking tea and fucking cake. I have a fucking brain. Keep your fucking tokens. Babies don't give a shit about art. Babies don't need art galleries. Mothers need art galleries.

This is a public institution. Take care of your children in the Turbine Hall. Won't do. Twenty kids running in forty different directions. Want the Rothko room. Tall skinny professional millennial is on the defence. Childless. She might be here one day. Fuck her, he's more sympathetic. Daddy. Not getting Rothko. They can't kick us out. Public institution. Wouldn't have to if you had a fucking crèche. No more art carts. No we don't want a fucking family room. We want a crèche and we want it now. Made our own for a few hours. Some mothers saw art. Had to compromise. Occupied a room surrounded by glass, not hidden away this time. Small victory. Rothko had one exit. Quiet contemplation. Good for the kids.

culture that does not teach women to love the mother. Yet it is the most important knowledge; without it, it is difficult to learn the rest and be original in something....'

In the symbolic there is no space for the mother. Muraro writes 'the symbolism of birth is present in various spheres, from the religious ceremony of baptism to artistic production, or to the conception of philosophy. These metaphors are commonly considered an acknowledgement of the magnitude of the work of the mother. But since this acknowledgement too often does not recognise the social authority of women in the flesh, I think that it is rather a way of depriving the mother of her prerogatives.'²⁴ Muraro talks of the non-metaphoric symbolism of the mother, experienced first-hand in childhood, meaning the time when we regarded the mother as central to our being, not in creational terms, not thankful for our existence but for how she was in the world. Muraro suggests our adoration of the mother in childhood occupies much of our thinking and contributes to our

²⁴ Muraro

Yellowism fucked it for us, bad timing.³¹
No chance. We didn't return. Artist not
activist. Activism not art. Borrowing.

being. There are no metaphors here, in
this instance the mother is real, the
experience was real. Depriving her of her

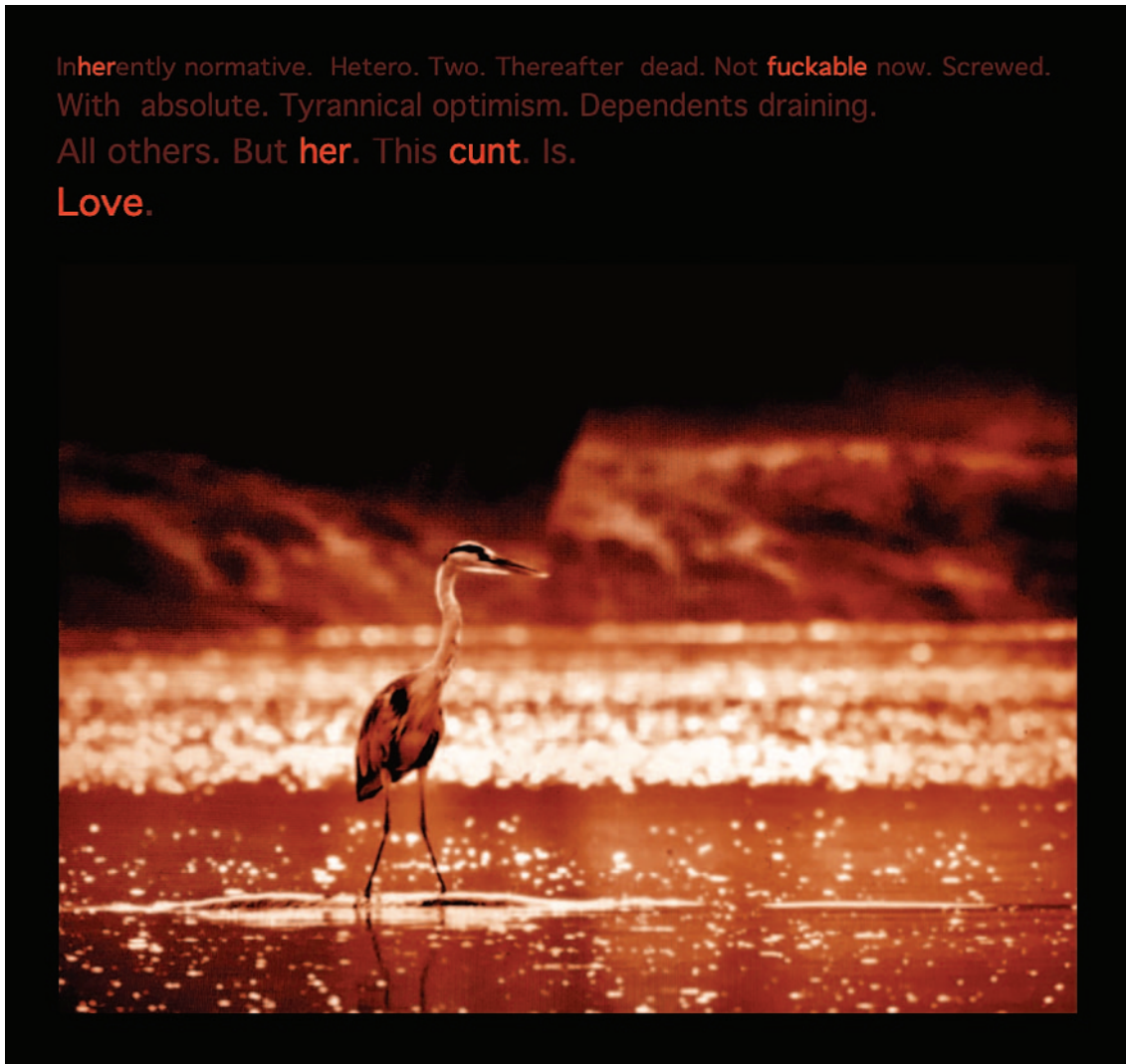


Fig 11 – Mullaney, Martina. *From Post Partum Disappointments*, Red, 2018

The myth of these older greats. Carmen
zero was as good. Could have been a star.
If Male. She said. Wrong sex love. Carmen
kept going. She said she couldn't sell her.

prerogatives as mother denies her space in
a social context also. Further deprivations
of her prerogatives in relation to lived
experience play out in this chapter. What
I regard to be the dysfunction of the
symbolic further reinforces the negation
of the mother as outlined in chapter one.

³¹ Yellowism refers to the act of defacing a
Mark Rothko Seagram Mural at Tate Modern
by the artist Vladimir Umanets in 2012.

Painted through it. Making it now tho. Fucking super stars. Old ladies. Older masters. Couldn't kill them. Fucking had a good go at it all the same. They rise. Rose, rose in the end. More myth making. Phyllida did too. Susan never stopped. RIP.

Emin said motherhood and art practice incompatible. Fuck off. Not helpful. There is art after. I'm making it. Bitch. Emin zero. Barlow five. Barlow mothered on. Mullaney one. Mullaney mothers on. Hepworth four. Hepworth opted to board hers. Studio practice prevailed. Rego three. Rego locked herself away in Portugal. Off-spring ignored, by their own admission. Neel two. Painted around hers. Her boys couldn't compete, and felt it. Somewhat fucked up it could be said. She carried on painting. Why not. Abromovic says children hold back female artists. And she should fucking know. No husband. No family. Freedom. No question. No limits. Gave her genius away to easily. Sold her genius. Blue chips. So long sister.

Brown says children force artists to be conventional. No shit. Good bye Larry. Bourgeois didn't stop for ten years. She just didn't show it. Marten zero. Fucked off the desert. And who could fucking blame her.

In Catholicism the virgin Mary is a potent symbol of the mother in Western culture.²⁵ Julia Kristeva wrote *Stabat Mater* when she became a mother, but never fully returned to the subject of the maternal in psychoanalysis, which leaves us without a conclusion, or indeed maybe a solution. Kristeva describes “an idealisation of primary narcissism”, what she refers to as a fantasy by men and women, of the mother, not a personal relationship we might experience as individuals but one that occupies a collective consciousness primarily due to Christianity's claim on the mother as virgin, unattainable, to be revered from afar, untouchable. The symbol of the virgin purports her to be whole, virtuous; sex and pleasure are beneath her. The title *Stabat Mater* is taken from a thirteenth century Latin hymn, on the sorrows of the Virgin Mary at the foot of the cross weeping for her dead son. It enjoys a similar position in the hierarchy of classical church music such as Ave Maria, a prayer with its origins in Catholicism, rooted in the Christian

²⁵ Ed., Toril Moi, *The Kristeva Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1993, p.161.

Douglas felt she had to keep hers a fucking secret.³² Peyton waited till retirement.³³ Holzer apologises with some regularity. She should not. She should take on the government. Who did not help her. She should have shouted it loud. She should have. For the mumas to come after her.

He called it an enemy of promise. Total fucking privileged snob. The ruling classes. No distraction. If you need a shag find a man. Women get stuffed. Literally. Brats are distracting. To whom. She called hers *Enemies of Good Art*. Enemies, they don't know who their enemies are. They think she produced her own. She did not asshole. You did. Twisted bastards. What sick fuck would do that. She is not self-sabotaging here. You don't fucking want her. Raising your consciousness. Why not, Sylvia and her sisters did. A series of private intimate exchanges. They were beautiful. Gradually they moved. They started that wave. She is still in awe. She fancied a wave of her own. Gave it a go. She knocked on their fucking doors and they let her in. She thought she

³² Caroline Douglas, Director of The Contemporary Arts Society, Interview with Frieze Magazine, <<https://frieze.com/article/women-arts-caroline-douglas>>, accessed 25/08/19.

³³ Julia Peyton, former director of the Serpentine Gallery, London.

bible, an adoration of the virgin.²⁶

Unlike Emin, who has no experience of motherhood, Phyllida Barlow has five children. In an interview to celebrate her commission for the Venice Biennial, Barlow declared that on the subject of family commitments and art practice, *'the two things are completely incompatible'*.²⁷ For Barlow to make this declaration given that she was already an established artist in her own right, teaching at The Slade for more than forty years, with connections to London's art elite, is a poor reflection on privilege. Her husband Fabian Peake is also an artist. Both Barlow and Peake come from

²⁶ In her essay *Stabat Mater*, Julia Kristeva establishes the construction of the 'Mother' in the form of the Blessed Virgin, Our Lady, Mother of God, Marion Cult, (with reference to Marina Warner and *Alone of All her Sex*) through religion, with specific reference to Christianity and Catholicism. She credits the term virgin as a mis-translation of the Greek work for virgin, applied to a unmarried or young woman (in Hebrew the word is merely a 'young woman') dating back to the Bible. Mary as a construct was established to uphold the myth of the Immaculate Conception, as only an untarnished woman could host a god in her womb.

²⁷ The Telegraph, Alistair Stoke, *Phyllida Barlow: On Representing Britain at the Venice Biennale*. 6th May 2017, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/art/artists/phyllida-barlow-struggling-sell-art-50-years-lives-slum/>.

were changing the (art) World. She was not – they were just placating her. The bastards. She couldn't believe how easy it was. Stupid.

famous, and privileged, families. She is descended from Charles Darwin, and Peake's father was the writer Mervyn Peake, famous for the *Gormenghast*

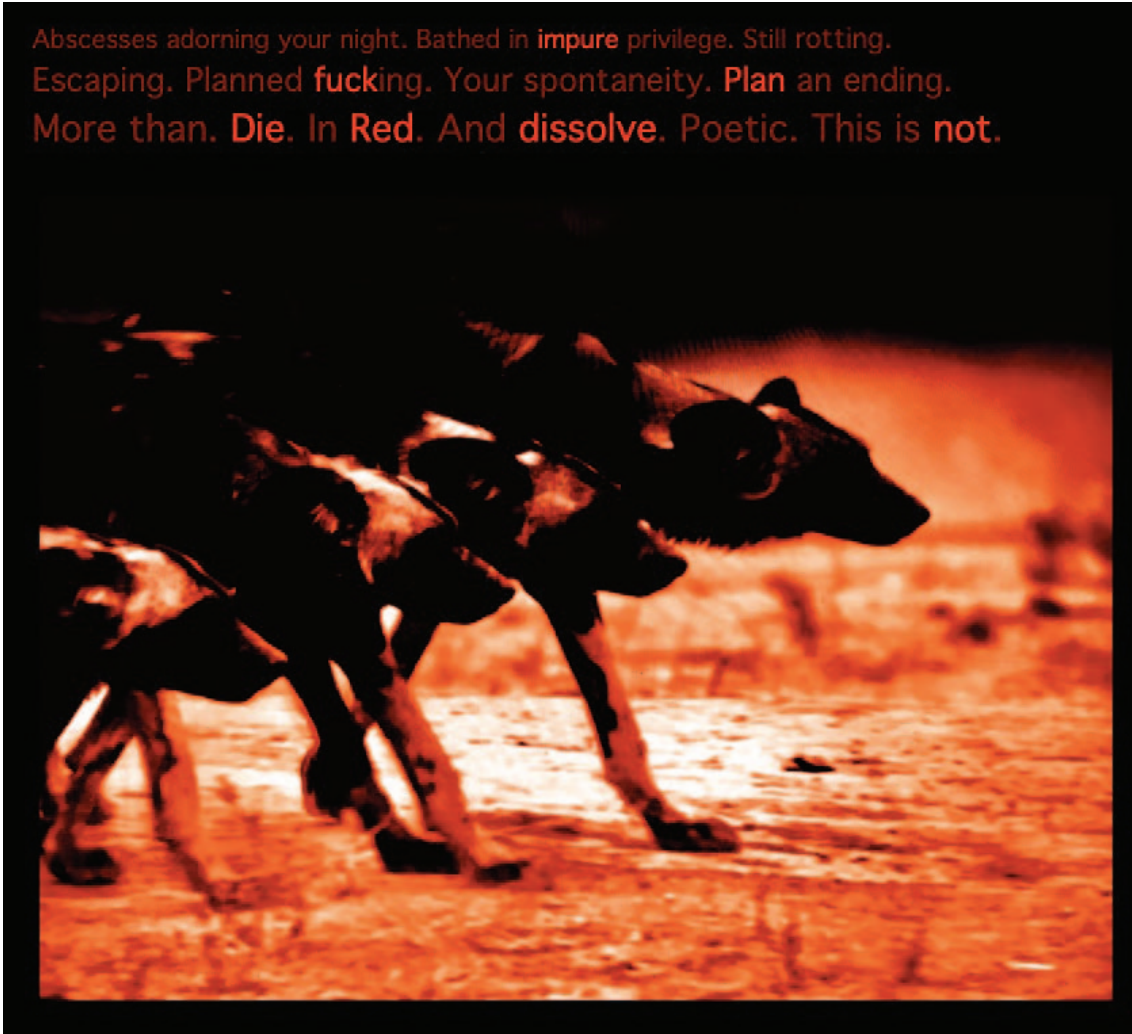


Fig 12 – Mullaney, Martina. *From Post Partum Disappointments*, Red, 2018

Started screaming. Behind the desk every week. Her voice became art. For a time and she fucking loved it. Felt good. Brought babe with her. Babe didn't love it. She was never going to be her enemy. She made her. In fear of Irigaray.

stories, and also an artist. Their son is the artist Eddie Peake. Both Emin and Barlow have knowingly participated in the misogyny of the art world; free of children or of their hetero-normative libidinal value they then became sexless,

She asked after her. She didn't know what she knows now. She knew it wouldn't work but fuck it. She tried. Nothing to lose. She looked for her fore sisters. She actioned an action. Pop-Up is what they call it now. So she Pop-Up-Ed (Spelling mine). She walked with banners. Talked around expensive public tables. Met in kitchens. Living the dream. She went on radio. she fucks you not. Couldn't believe her fucking luck. Mummas coming out the woodworks. She started this thing. Felt fucking good. Again.

and therefore male. Marina Abramovic took to the stage for a private lecture where only women were allowed during Anthony's Meltdown at Southbank Centre in 2012.²⁸ The actress Kim Cattrall introduced the lecture and welcomed the

²⁸ In 2012 Anthoni (formerly Anthony and the Johnsons) curated Meltdown where Marina Abramovic was invited to perform. She gave a private lecture, where only women we admitted; this restriction extended to the production crew also. <<https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on/festivals-series/meltdown?tab=past-curators>>, accessed 10/10/20.



Fig 13 – Mullaney, Martina. *Enemies of Good Art*, Whitechapel Gallery. London 2009

She was bringing Moma to your consciousness. No wounded dog hiding here.

Taking as many sisters along as she could muster. Luisa started talking Italian in nineteen ninety one. Symbolic order she called it. Twenty seven years later. We got it in English. More progressive on the continent, more had it before. She got all symbolic and called those middle class mummies up. Her desperation was all over London. Nothing to lose. She had no fucks to give. Radicalised herself through Shulie. She was disappointed. Solanas for solace.

audience 'to the revolution'. Abramovic almost immediately declared that she was not a feminist. She did not identify as feminist and felt that she did not feel the need for the title. She has also spoken openly about not being a mother and that for her having children 'would have been a disaster for her practice'.²⁹

bell hooks likens feminism in the United States to being a feminism of white women.³⁰ Adrian Piper critiques western white male privilege in the art world, and a bias towards what she calls a Euro-ethnic male aesthetic concentrated around minimalism and conceptualism.³¹

Piper argues that postmodernism functions against coloured women artists (CWA) as it assumes the mantle of white male heterosexual culture dominating the United States. One that sees no value in art that seeks an emotional response, a female trait, or one that brings colonialism and its painful repercussions into question. Piper is talking of art that reacts against oppression and seeks a truth for past painful histories, her own work here being a good example. I make the point that CWA are disadvantaged by virtue of the fact that they are black, women and artists. I question hierarchies of neglect here, who considers the mother (being white) where the black mother artist is even further negated.

²⁹ The Guardian, Tuesday 26th July, 2016, *Marina Abramovic says having children would have been 'a disaster for my work'*.

³⁰ bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*, London: Pluto, 1990.

³¹ Piper, Adrian, *The Triple Negation of Coloured Women Artists in ed.*, Jones, Amelia, *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, New York: Routledge, 2003.

I make reference to the feminist canon as outlined in chapter one, where Mary Kelly as an example of tokenism and how it functions to establish the anointed one, as the only one, the Virgin Mary over every other Mary, in this instance Mary Kelly and *Post-Partum Document* over every other work on maternity.

Andrea O'Reilly coined the term 'matricentric feminism' in 2016, brought about by her experience of being ignored by feminism in the academy.³² She felt the mother missing from academic feminist conferences and negative reactions from other academic feminists when she addressed the issue. Kristeva suggests that '*While a certain feminism continues to mistake its own sulking isolation for political protest or even dissidence, real; female innovation (in whatever social field) will only come about when maternity, female creation and the link between them are better understood.*'³³

Lynne Segal talks of the problems of continuity in the Liberation Movement when protest and activism gave way to the intellectualisation of feminism. '*The troubled afterlife of Women's Liberation saw feminists heading off in a variety of different journeys, wither working in groups or, increasingly, individually, as the movement imploded in the 1980s.*'³⁴ This made way for what would become neoliberal feminism with an emphasis on the family and the individual, as Thatcher and Regan came into power, subsequently undermining the collective spirit and work on the movement.

Jacobs argues that we live under a matricidal culture where mothers are rendered insignificant, the symbolic is problematic here: she cannot be for she has been murdered before she could be adored. She cannot hold space in our collective consciousness; she has been obliterated. Jacobs traces matricide back to Greek mythology when Orestes kills his mother Clytemnestra.³⁵

³² O'Reilly, Andrea, *Matricentric Feminism; Theory, Activism, and Practice*, Bradford, ON: Demeter Press, 2016.

³³ Moi, Toril, (ed.), *The Kristeva Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1993. p 298.

³⁴ Lynne Segal, *Making Trouble Making Trouble, Life and Politics*, London: Serpent's Tail, 2007 p. 13.

³⁵ Jacobs, Amber, *On Matricide: Myth, Psychoanalysis, and the Law of the Mother*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.

Clare Hemmings sees academic feminism as something removed from the lives of ordinary women, despite the many forms of feminism that currently occupy academia. '*Starting from invested attention to silences in the history of feminist theory, then, I suggest several ways of making the stories we tell both more ethically accountable and potentially more politically transformative*'.³⁶ Meanwhile many of the concerns of second wave feminism such as childcare and the pay gap continue to be issues for women, despite the advances in activist feminism and the Equal Pay Act of 1970. My generation, born in the 1970s, have for the most part turned to feminism after the birth of children, too young to have lived through the activism of the 1960s and 70s, not young enough to not need feminism. Nevertheless, we feel nostalgic for a time when activism and collectivity promised a better world or the possibility of one.

On the occasion of each featured exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery, parents are invited to bring children of preschool age into the gallery, before opening hours, for a curator-led talk. After which parents and their children are invited for tea and cake in the education rooms only available to the public during programmed events.³⁷ My critique of this initiative is one of disappointment, as it supports the systems that keep us buried. It panders to the symbolic as one of quiet virtue, where we are hidden. *Enemies of Good Art* was never interested in hiding in the back rooms of gallery spaces. Whenever possible we gathered in exhibition and other public spaces where we would be visible, such as the Turbine Hall of Tate Modern, in the installation *The Nature of the Beast* at the Whitechapel Gallery, and in the Clore Ballroom during the Women of the World Festival at the Southbank Centre.³⁸

The myth of the older great woman artist as suggested in a host of recent writings on older women in the art world, suggests that women will eventually succeed in having

³⁶ Hemmings, Clare, *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory*, North Carolina, Duke University Press, 2011, p. 2.

³⁷ Crib Notes, <<https://www.whitechapelgallery.org/events/crib-notes-london-open-2018>>, accessed on 25/02/19.

³⁸ For a critique of the civilising effects of the museum, see Bennett, T., *The Political Rationality of the Museum in The Birth of the Museum*, History, Theory, Politics. London: Routledge, 1995.

commercial success if they are willing to wait for it.³⁹ The question here is not what the work is about, and in the case of many recent artists who have attained a degree of success maternity has not featured, presumably because they are long past rearing children for it to feature in their work, or it is still too undesirable as a subject to risk it in the contemporary art world. When Susan Hiller made *Ten Months* in 1977–79, she was berated for doing so ‘I was told by someone important in the art world that with this work I separated myself by joining the feminists and that I ruined my career. But who cares? I had a substantial track record.’⁴⁰

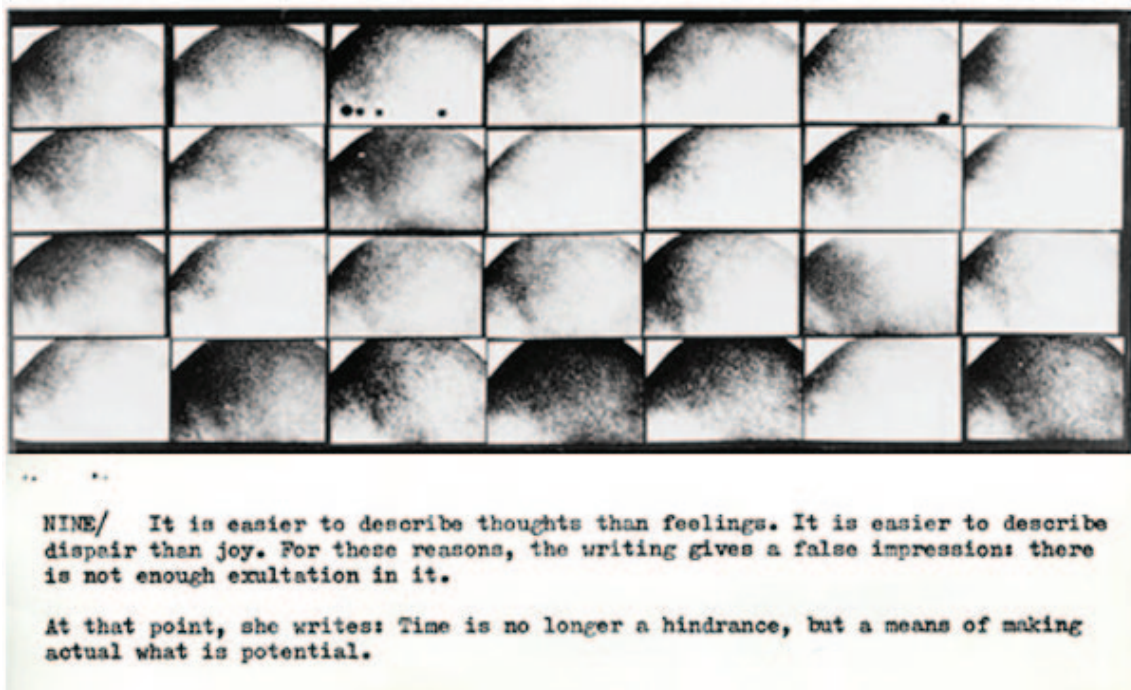


Fig 25 – Hiller, Susan. *Ten Months*, 1977-79

The painter Cecily Brown left The Gagosian Gallery in 2015 after 15 years.⁴¹ At that time, her child was of school age. In the piece referenced here she talks of the conventions of having children, the inflexibility of their needs and the needs of the

³⁹ Liss, Andrea, *Feminist Art and the Maternal*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009, p. 13.

⁴⁰ *Why Older Women Have Replaced Young Men as the Art World's Darlings*. <Artsy.net>, accessed 15/01/19.

⁴¹ Belclove, Julie L., *After Gagosian, Cecily Brown Hits Reset: Smaller Paintings, Smaller Gallery, Evil Mice, and Male Nudes*. New York: Vulture, 2015

artist. Her practice changed: she went from making large scale paintings to more manageable smaller ones. In the interview she cites the need for change and the desire to work on smaller canvases as fuel for her departure from one of the biggest art dealers in the world. Carmen Herrera refuses to talk about not having had children but she recounts abject sexism of the 1970s art world.⁴² Children were not her impediment as she battled through impositions posed upon her for being female. Herrera is reported to have sold her first painting at the age of 89 in 2004; she is also reported to have had her first solo show in Europe at Ikon Gallery, Birmingham in 2009.⁴³ Reading through her CV published on the Lisson Gallery's website, Herrera has enjoyed regular attention through solo and group exhibitions throughout her adult life.⁴⁴ Having children or not continues to pose problems even for the most known of artists; to maintain practice Brown has downsized, but at what cost is yet to be determined.

In 1938 the writer Cyril Connolly claimed that '*there was no more somber enemy of good art than the pram in the hall.*'⁴⁵ I have taken *Enemies of Good Art* from this book. A stoic reaction to Connolly's assertion that a family was the ultimate distraction for the creative (male).

⁴² In the documentary on her life Carmen Herrera talks of being rejected by a prominent female gallerist for being a woman, and told that if she were a man with the same work her work would sell.

⁴³ <<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/dec/31/carmen-herrera-men-controlled-everything-art>>, accessed 12:10:17.

⁴⁴ For Carmen Herrera's CV see Lisson Gallery website. <https://d1jrlzqbjb41.cloudfront.net/uploads/attachment/file/body/18242/Carmen_Herrera_CV.pdf>

⁴⁵ Connolly, Cyril, *Enemies of Promise*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul LTD, 1949, p.116

Chapter Four

The Good Object

The work *The Good Object*, creating space for the mother is an installation comprising a sound recording booth, to be situated in a museum/gallery context made in collaboration with MUF Architects London. It was constructed during the first *Idle Women Residency*, and situated in the local Rosegrove Library, outside Burnley, Lancashire.³⁴ The residency was offered to women artists for a period of three months to take place on the Leeds Liverpool Canal. Artists we invited to live on board a specially commissioned narrow boat by MUF Architects, the firm appointed to design and build the vessel. For this work I collaborated with Liza Fior, where we envisioned a space dedicated to mothers, a sanctuary of sorts, a private space. Central to the piece was the need to accommodate small children. Evidence

³⁴ *Idle Women* is an Arts Council Funded, feminist separatist arts organization. Its first iteration was a two-year project, a series of artists' residencies on a specially commissioned narrow boat. The project was located on the Leeds Liverpool Canal. For my residency, we were moored at Rosegrove Canal Services.

Mirror

The Good Object

My work *The Good Object* takes its name from Melanie Klein's essay *On The Sense of Loneliness* (1963). Where Klein talks 'inner loneliness' not one derived from a lack of company but more of a sense of aloneness, regardless of physical company. 'If the good internal object is established with relative security, it becomes the core of the developing child.'⁴⁶ In this chapter I consider spaces where I have found the mother to be missing, including psychoanalysis and intersectionality. I think through Luisa Muraro and her work on the symbolic order of the mother, coming from a positive place where she suggests we rethink the mother from a positive perspective, one that means we learn to love the mother, not exclude her from intellectual spaces. The installation *The Good Object* and writing relating to it through this chapter look at *The Missing Mother* in what I consider is an obliteration of the mother by psychoanalysis. Here

⁴⁶ Klein, Melanie, *The Writings of Melanie Klein, Vol. 3: Envy and Gratitude and Other Works 1946-1963*, London: Karnac, 1993, p. 310.

of this can be seen in the architect's drawings in Fig 14.³⁵ A prototype of the piece was constructed in the form of a round bookcase, complete with door and ceiling for privacy. The bookcase contained only work by women taken from the shelves of the library. In future incarnations of the piece, I would include the bibliography from this Ph.D. and period of research, additionally literary works by women writers relating to maternity, including fiction and poetry. Visitors to *The Good Object* will be invited to use the recording booth/library to record mothering as experience.

Psychic. Mothering is. Lonely. I looked towards the woman. Who wrote. Not the "beautiful" woman Uncle Freud speaks of. I looked for the internal object. Klein Speaks of. Good internal objects. Mother/child objects. Bound in unending. Responsibilities. Not of a stick to beat her with.

³⁵ MUF Architects are a London based women only firm. Liza Fior was appointed the architect on the *Idle Women* specially commissioned butty, the Selina Cooper. The butty was intended as a strictly women only space, where men were discouraged from visiting and not allowed inside the vessel.

I look at feminist critique of psychoanalysis through a variety of texts. I also acknowledge that the Mother is missing, for the term 'intersectionality' and its associated meaning. Irigaray believes that matricide is central to western patriarchal culture.⁴⁷ In *On Matricide: Myth, Psychoanalysis, and the Law of the Mother*, Amber Jacobs writes: 'What this means is there is no place within psychoanalytic theory for a maternal subject position that could function as a site of structuring power leading to a mode of symbolisation that does not refer automatically to the

⁴⁷ Irigaray, Luce, *The Irigaray Reader*, ed., Margaret Whitford, Oxford: Blackwell, 1995. Irigaray believes matricide is the basis of our patriarchal society, on which the systematic silencing of the woman, through the mother is a requisite to the social order. The social order in accordance with patriarchy as explained via Irigaray places the male as the god/king figure who reigns over, controls and maintains the social order. His sons and grandsons inherit this right and continue his reign. Irigaray relates this back to Greek mythology and the story of Helen of Troy, when matricide established the new order between men and women, as a result of Apollo ordering Orestes to kill his mother, she having killed Agamemnon on his return from Troy. Orestes and his sister Electra go mad as a result. While Electra is left to her madness Orestes is saved from his by the male-adoring Apollo so that the new order may establish itself.

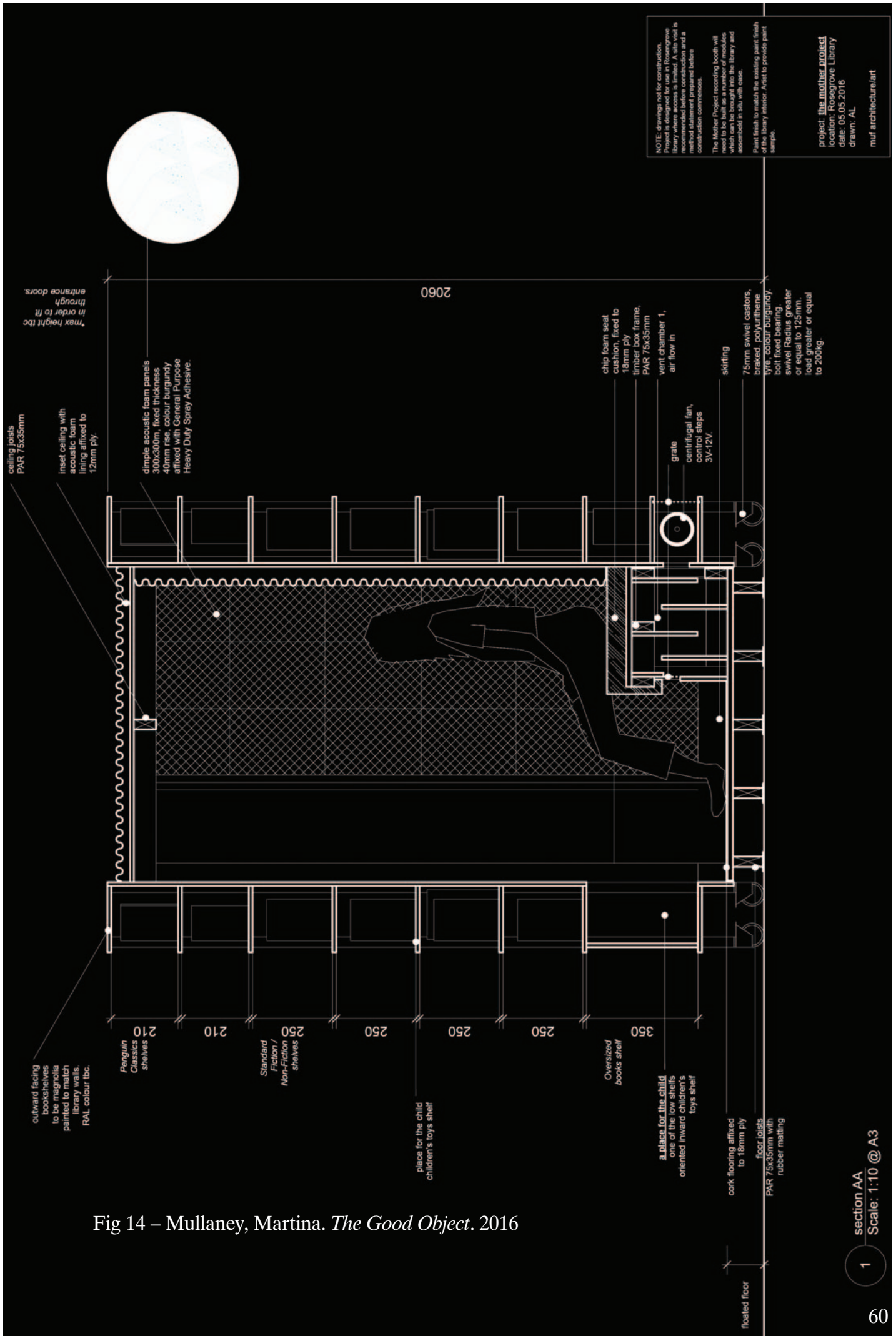


Fig 14 – Mullaney, Martina. *The Good Object*. 2016

The Residency, Idle Women. Selina Cooper. Artist, Child and Dog. Separatism, sucks! The sanctuary forbade men on board the boat. Masturbation was possible. There was no-one to talk to. Social media again. Photographed daily. Liked the attention on socials. Abandoned. Local women were not interested in feminism. Community art. Daughter loved the freedom. No school for two months. Getting past her own audience. For Once. Artists with children. Space for the mother. Supervisor. Thought her a Privileged bitch. She thought so too. Until. Those fucking Separatists. Burnley, Greater Manchester. Guinea Pig. Child and dog in toe. Accommodation, artists fee, no expected outcome. Idle hosts. A sanctuary for women. Escape patriarchy. Create Matriarchy. Escape neoliberalism. Escape a capitalist London centric art world. Art stars. Art dogs. Blue chips. Money laundering market. The monster. This arts org. Retreat. A sanctuary. Expensive newly commissioned narrow boat. Thank you Arts Council. Liverpool/Leeds canal. Sanctuary my fucking hole. Rape threats. Moored by a fucking rubbish dump. Electrics on

paternal law'.⁴⁸ The mother is still the object, she is not the subject, this is the problem of psychoanalysis, until she becomes the subject she has no voice. 'It is as if, for psychoanalysis the only self-worth worrying about in the mother-child relationship were that of the child.'⁴⁹ But is this even possible, can psychoanalysis position the mother in positive terms? Irigaray suggests 'the maternal function underpins the social order and the order of desire, but it is always kept in a dimension of need. Where desire is concerned, especially in its religious dimension, the role of maternal feminine power is often nullified in the satisfying of individual and collective needs'.⁵⁰

Hélène Cixous in *Coming to Writing* talks of her own frustrations with Freud where she is talking about real women and 'not the "beautiful" woman Uncle Freud

⁴⁸ Jacobs, Amber, *On Matricide: Myth, Psychoanalysis, and the Law of the Mother*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2007, preface page ref.

⁴⁹ Rubin Suleiman, Susan, *Risking Who One Is: Encounters With Contemporary Art And Literature*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1994, p. 16. 6

⁵⁰ Irigaray, Luce, *The Irigaray Reader*, ed., Margaret Whitford, Oxford: Blackwell, 1995, p. 36.

board didn't work. Child. Sisterhood is Powerful (book). Sisterhood can be powerful. The sisterhood was not powerful. When you don't even fit. Outside expected norms. In this fucked-up sanctuary her motherhood was a problem. The mother was missing. She was missing. Child a nuisance. Heterosexuality disgusting. No penis envy here. Patriarchal enemies. Boy child not allowed. Separatism. Childcare. Found some out of spite. Lancashire felt dirty. Dog shite. Mallards gang raping their females. Cross species matricide. No fucking fridge. Hole in the floor was ineffective. Food shopping daily, added labour. Empty eco toilet or flood bathroom with one's own piss. Keep the home fires burning (Maintenance Manifesto) or suffer the cold.

Left out at every turn. Their Inter – Section – Ality. Won't do. She had more reason that most to feel it. She found a word for it. White fems didn't take her in. Big problem for them. Now it's a problem for us. Intersectio – nality. Inter sec tion mater nality. Either way we are on our own, again. This sisterhood doesn't fucking empower her. And it's not even an obvious fucking problem.

speaks of'.⁵¹ Freud, she believes is no friend of mothers, women in general do not interest him much. For the purpose of this thesis it is not necessary to rethink or re-present Freud here. Citing from Cixous, I would suggest that Freud has a problem with women in general. The mother, for him she is not even a problematic, she does not exist. In her introduction to the book *Mothering Psychoanalysis*, Janet Sayers talks of patriarchy and its effects on psychoanalysis.⁵² She critiques Freud and the phallogentric nature of his practice. This is the position Margaret Harrison takes when she notes that there are other ways to live. By following phallogentric modes of work, artists such as Abramovic, Emin and Barlow emulate the problems of phallogentricism, perpetuating the problem for younger generations.

Melanie Klein in *On a Sense of Loneliness* offers some reading of the mother in psychic terms when she talks of the splitting of the ego in infancy (good and bad), the importance of the 'object'

⁵¹ Cixous, Hélène, *Coming to Writing and Other Essays*, ed. and trans. by Deborah Jenson *et al.*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991, p. 51.

⁵² Sayers, Janet, *Mothering Psychoanalysis*, London: Penguin, 1992, Introduction.

Don't understand.

My maternity. My suicide. Who gives a shit. Still angry, but less so now...., maybe. How to photograph loneliness. Daily on my phone. Self contained dark room in my hand. Thought of Barthes. Punctum. And Kristeva. No jouissance. Made space in the end. Made some space. Not that anyone gave a fuck. Much.

She's still got her arms full. Don't agree with your parenting pontifications. You're on your way she's not, asshole. She can't see it. Doesn't want to. Mothers see it. Mothers know. Mothers stay the fuck on the case. They will kill you otherwise. Have been killing you since the Greeks. Fucking gorgeous stories of gods killing their mothers, fucking their sisters, fucking their mothers, like it gives legitimacy to this fucked up mess. Psycho babble no one understands is not interested in her. Her son wants to fuck her. And that's pretty much it in a nut shell. Where the fuck do you go from here.

It started long before Mediterranean Myths. She once was worshiped for her

which becomes the good object, that is, the mother and the splitting of the object into good and bad. A positive splitting of the ego and the object into their good parts, unprotected in the young infant can lead to insecurities in the child later in life. Klein talks of 'other' splitting processes as having potential detrimental effects later in life for the individual. She speaks of fragmentation and the potential for life-long devastating effects on the psyche, leading to a sense of loneliness in later life. Of course, the responsibility is placed on the mother-child relationship, or rather the mother as the good object in the end.

But what does this have to do with the mother and the works of art I am making? Importantly the mother in this instance is the root of security and insecurity. Is this in itself a drive that mothers instinctively know and that society and the state exploit? The obligations in the mother as the primary caregiver make her role in life all-consuming: the space, physical and mental to divide her time with another equally demanding activity, that is, her creativity, becomes diminished. How can her genius flourish? What are the solutions, and indeed, are there any? Freud pays little attention to the mother as experience.

creative powers. They fell at her beautiful feet. Irigaray. Before silence. Sex. Second. She thought she knew what she was talking about. Born. Of. Woman. She'd had enough before she even started. The good ladies of the movement didn't pave the way. Why not. Were they birthed by fucking monkeys. She did it and we're still reading it.

Need M O T H E R H O U S E reincarnated. Apparently. Another self organised space to hide away in. Hey, feel fucking good for a while. While we do our shit. Kids along side us. Hanging from our tits. Buddies doing it together fighting the good fight. Despite your best efforts we the middle white educated will not be oppressed. Those that do can afford the battle. Husbands at home oppressing them further and they don't even know it. Black kids, poor kids, don't go to art school. Mothers don't either. Find a space. Make it our own. Take turns making art. Do a little. Better than nothing. Like fuck it is. Long periods of concentration. Who needs it. Not you love. Your days are numbered. Cardi B insta. Fuck you and fuck them. Kulture keeps going. Mothers know. Mothers stay the fuck on the case. They will kill

Klein, by comparison, acknowledges the reaction of the child to the mother can also impact on her own wellbeing.⁵³ This symbiotic relationship in infancy for the child has the potential to nurture both, mother and child. As Alison Stone states in the forward to *The Symbolic Order of The Mother*: 'My concern, then, is that Muraro's symbolic order of the mother may, ironically, be an order in which mothers can speak only from the position of daughters, but which allows women no possibility of speaking as mothers, from any specifically maternal vantage point'.⁵⁴

⁵³ Klein, Melanie, *On A Sense of Loneliness, in The Writings of Melanie Klein, Vol. 3: Envy and Gratitude and Other Works 1946-1963*, London: Karnac, 1993.

⁵⁴ Muraro, Luisa, *The Symbolic Order of the Mother*, trans. by Francesca Novello, Albany, NY: State University of New York, 2018, Introduction. My problem with the text also. It is suggestive of more theory that is again aimed at the woman. From the position of the daughter, the son will never feature. He will never be a mother. He becomes unaccountable but also unexpected. This will never be his problem. The substratum is upheld by women only in this case. Where it is assumed the audience will be women, the problematic that is the maternal is further compounded by the mother/daughter audience/experience pre-relationship. The lack of available theory on men and masculinity is noted here. Psychoanalysis looks at the son/mother relation from the point of sexual desire and not from a maternal perspective. What is this attached to?

you otherwise. Have been killing you since the Greeks. Fucking gorgeous stories of gods killing their mothers. Fucking their sisters. Fucking their mothers. Like it gives legitimacy to this fucked up mess. And that's pretty much it in a nutshell. Where the fuck do we go from here. Twisted popularity of it all. The go to place the lazy, go to. But you cannot ignore her.

I went looking for her everywhere. If feminists don't love who's gonna. Misguided fool. Is this why she feels so bad. The pills should be kicking in. Thought it was the obvious place. Motherhood is lonely.

called western culture 'Doubtless children too readily fear the father and his seeming power. Nevertheless the social dominance of men eliciting such images of the father as powerful and punitive patriarch lives on.'⁵⁵

In maternal splitting Melanie Klein explores the murderous intent of the child towards the mother, in what she considered to be the good and bad mother, that is also the good and bad breast. This is foundational to child/mother relations in the developmental stages of the child, where the child regards the mother in relation to positive and negative experiences. To protect themselves, the child will avoid its murderous intentions towards the mother by developing (splitting) with other women, teachers, other caregivers, the wicked stepmother.

The conversation on what constitutes a mother is an important one. The question of the mother, mothering, and why the father can and should also be encouraged to do so, releases us culturally and sociologically from the burden of what Susan Ruben Suleiman calls the 'omnipotent mother'. If men also engage in mothering, the responsibility no longer squarely sits with women. To understand what she means by the omnipotent mother Suleiman is talking about the all-knowing, all-powerful mother in the life of the child, utterly responsible for the child's life in every sense. This is not only something women assume, it is bestowed upon us by partners, the state and culturally, and from the perspective of so-

⁵⁵ Sayers, Jayne, *Mothering Psychoanalysis*, London: Penguin, 1992, p. 9.

On Winnicott and the 'good enough mother', Luisa Muraro suggests he suffers from what she calls Parmenides Syndrome. Parmenides' philosophy posits that all experience is universal, generalising the monstrous 'we' to the whole of human experience. I am not convinced by Winnicott's 'good enough' mother. Muraro argues that he seems to shoot himself in the foot. He contradicts himself where he states that the creation of the world is the work of the couple being that of the mother and child; he later states that it is in fact the work of the individual, separate from the mother. In effect he negates the mother in favour of a separation that Muraro feels is unnecessary and unhelpful. 'In other words, symbolic independence is necessarily paid for with the loss of the point of view of the couple creating the world.'⁵⁶ As I understand it, the couple being the mother and child relation.

I am left wondering why much is made of Oedipal relations of the son to the mother by feminist writers. Lacan sees the mother as Other relegated to her desire, loss of jouissance. Melanie Klein (much as I am drawn to her, in particular to her theories on loneliness which I used in the artwork *The Good Object*) sees the mother as object, the good and bad object posits the mother as the voiceless Other. While she reflects on the mother/daughter relationship, the inevitable breaking away of the child and the splitting of the ego is not something she posits as a positive negotiated event; between mother and child it is violent and destructive. I look to Ettinger,⁵⁷ and her theories of *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Irigaray, *Vegetal Being*⁵⁸ and Haraway in the *The Chthulucene*⁵⁹ for possibilities of a future where she belongs in the discussion, considering what Muraro, Irigaray and Ettinger refer to as the matrix of life in relation to reproduction and the maternal in particular.

⁵⁶ Muraro, Luisa, *The Symbolic Order of the Mother*, trans. By Francesca Novello, Albany, NY: State University of

⁵⁷ Ettinger, Bracha L., *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2006 New York, 2018. P 39

⁵⁸ Irigaray, Luce, *Through Vegetal Being*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2006

⁵⁹ Haraway, Donna J., *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2016

In psychoanalysis the mother-child relation must be broken, the act is not negotiated, it is a necessity. Patriarchal psychoanalysis using Freud and phallogocentrism as above, posit the breakdown of the mother-child bond as detrimental to the mother in favour of the father. If psychoanalysis follows the developmental stages of the child in the formation of the psyche, how can it consider the adult mother as experience? This is also true of fatherhood, but fathers suffer less for this fact and beyond the scope of this study. Luisa Muraro in *The Symbolic Order of the Mother* recognises the negation of the mother in psychic terms, but refuses to uphold established negativities. Instead she calls for a rethink of the mother-child experience, not as a negative, but as negotiation between child and mother, a positive willed-for experience on both sides of the relationship. She also addresses the issue of psychoanalysis and the mother or her absence from within psychoanalysis as a problem in psychic and intellectual terms. Where she can offer no solution to the problematic other than a change in discourse, she does, however, address language and patriarchy, which I address in chapter 2. Notably she offers a rethinking of the mother, in symbolic and psychic terms in the context of what she calls the 'matrix of life'.

Chapter Five

She will never be a ballet dancer

The work *She will never be a ballet dancer* is a recording of me singing an entire album of songs by the artist Sia. During pregnancy vocal chords can swell and contract, distorting the sound produced. Professional singers are advised to rest their vocal chords during the third trimester to avoid possible permanent damage. After C, I couldn't sing. I gave birth at thirty-six years old. I mentioned casually to a brother that I would never be a ballet dancer. We were both just over forty at the time; I had the middle-aged realisation that the world was no longer my oyster. He thought me an idiot and laughed. The piece came to me during a four-hour drive from Lancashire to Wiltshire/Berkshire, a four-hour drive to drop C with her Papa. Fabulously fucked after that leg of the journey, I had another 45-minute drive before bed. I have only bought one album from iTunes, Sia, *This is Acting*. Earlier C was listening to the album wearing headphones, a distraction while I worked. I could hear her little voice at

Mirror

She will never be a ballet dancer

They grab you by the breasts, they pluck your derrière, they stuff you in a pot, they sauté you with sperm, they grab you by the beak, they stick you in a house, they fatten you up on conjugal oil, they shut you up in your cage. And now, lay.⁶⁰

In Jérôme Bel's film *Veronique Doisneau* (2004), a dancer is about to retire from the Paris opera.⁶¹ Doisneau introduces herself as a 42-year-old wife and mother of two children. Not entirely a failed artist in her trade, never celebrated for her talent, she laments a career never had. In her swan song Bel invites Doisneau to perform some of her most cherished and detested roles as a subject in the *corps de ballet*. Beautiful in her defeat, her maternity not the point of the

⁶⁰ Hélène Cixous, *Coming to Writing and Other Essays*, ed. and trans. by Deborah Jenson *et al.*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991, p. 27.

⁶¹ Bell, Jerome. "Veronique Doisneau 1." *YouTube*, YouTube, 11 Apr. 2009, <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OIuWY5PInFs>> , accessed on 16/04/19.

the other end of the space, singing. Struggling to stay awake I repeated her action. I blasted This is Acting into my ears and sang at the top of my voice. Back in Lancashire I recorded the exercise. The work was performed once, live in a gallery and recorded. Then played on continuous loop for the duration of the exhibition.

work, her age and impending retirement in her early forties, is. Soon to become obsolete in her field having never reached stardom, the work is both tragic and sublime as Veronique quietly leaves the stage and presumably her profession. What becomes of her we do not know. But in this tragedy played out as a narrated performance to a full audience



Fig 15 – Mullaney, Martina. *She Will Never Be A Ballet Dancer*. Pineapple Black, Middlesbrough, 2019.

She belonged there. She was already feeling obsolete. She knew the word. Obsolescence. Ob....scen.e. Not women,

at the Paris Opera, Bel immortalises Doisneau. He celebrates her defeat and by default turns her into a star, for one

not mothers. Years later she is still the thorn in your fucking side. She and her fellow Enemies. She went from one great big gallery to another. And why not. Taking some sisters with her. She thought her loneliness conquered. Then. Washed her filthy clothes in public. Not what you do. You dirty whore. No longer gave a fuck about image. And selling. And brand. And fuck reputation. This was art in the making. She was making art. Art making her in the end. Camden Arts Centre, Pino Pascali, 2011. Love. Why followed. Does the invigilator want to play. Don't they know she's an artist too. Maybe said invigilator is broody. Mother should attempt to understand. Invigilator should fuck off.

Raven Row. Pierre Leguillon. Slide show, Ad Reinhardt. November 2011. Hot, packed all seated. Sit near the exit. Child making sounds. Irritated well-heeled bastards eyeballing. Stop turning around you patronising fucker. Hotter. Toddler down to nappy and t-shirt. Breast feeding. Sleep. Until the clapping starts. Gather everything. Swift exit. Redress by front door. Humiliate the fuck out of her. Why have the entire gallery staff including Mr fucking

night, something she could not have achieved without him.

Raven Row was an attempt by me to attend an artists' talk with C; not out of protest, it was more a necessity to engage with the world I had previously navigated with ease.⁶² The incident was one of many in the art world that contributed to my humiliation. Zoe Moss was of a similar age when she wrote *It Hurts to be Alive and Obsolete*.⁶³ A passage from this short but painful autobiographical text features in the film *Twentieth Century Women* (2017). The lead character, a middle-aged single mother is read to by her fifteen-year-old son. In reading a passage from the essay he unwittingly suggests his mother is

⁶² Raven Row, <http://www.ravenrow.org/projects/pierre_leguillon/>, accessed 18/04/19. I attended an artists' talk by Pierre Leguillon on Ad Reinhardt. November 2011. The room was set up with two rows of chairs. I sat on the end row near the steps for an easy exit. I was the only woman with a child in attendance. The audience was mostly white and middle class. They were hostile to the presence of my child and and by default me also.

⁶³ Zoe Moss, *It Hurts to be Alive and Obsolete: The Aging Woman*, in Robin Morgan, (ed.), *Sisterhood is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings From The Women's Liberation Movement*, New York: Vintage, 1970.

Sainsbury formed a circle around. Fucking going. No coat for her. Freezing outside. Brings the house down. Both distraught. Ad long gone.

obsolete, lonely and invisible, sentiments that Moss felt were silencing women of her age (then forty-three). For fear of exposing herself and risk losing her

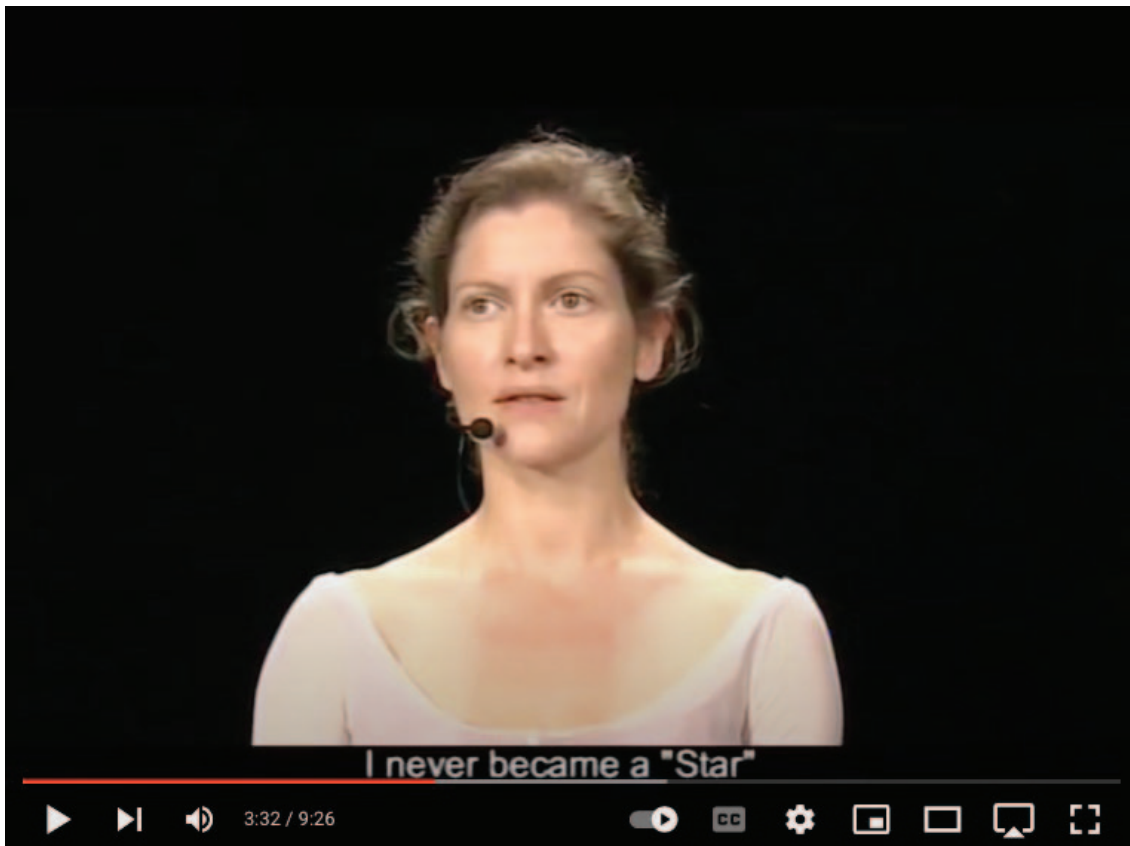


Fig 16 – Bell, Jerome. *Veronique Doisneau*, 2004

Her age is an 'ism to her now. Openly written in her furrowed brows. She can't talk about it. He could though. Veronique Doisneau. Mother of two. Her swan song. Beautiful in her defeat. On the shelf now. Always the fucking bride s'made (punctuation mine). More to cum.

livelihood, Moss used a pseudonym. The middle-aged mother in *She Will Never Be A Ballet Dancer*, performs the piece without hair, one side effect of cancer treatment, further exposing her vulnerability, suggesting that there are limits now to what she is likely to achieve, something her former younger self paid little attention to. The singer in

Ben be a daddy. His missus acting as his miss us. Kids doing like wise. On public platforms. Ikea if you don't mind. Getting into the Tate with that shit. He's shit was hot. He was a he. Domestic and hot. And he. She is not going there. Yet.

She Will Never Be A Ballet Dancer was 47 at the time of the performance, a similar age to Moss when she wrote her devastating work on aging women.

Where Jérôme Bel takes the life of one



Fig 17 – Ben Ner, Guy. *Stealing Beauty*, 2004

Barbican. Pioneers of The Downtown Scene 2011. Sat infant on Laurie Anderson, Anderson was cool. Fucking MDF plinth. For god's sake. Jumped up jobs-worth. Hate millennials. Abuse of power, not necessary to accompany her to the end of the exhibition. Public scolding. Humiliation her neonormal (neonormal mine) now. Baby months

woman and makes her a star for a night, Guy Ben-Ner in *Stealing Beauty* (2007), takes his private life into the most public of contexts.⁶⁴ The work was made in an Ikea store with his family acting out daily life in what looks to be their home. Ikea

⁶⁴ Guy, Ben-Ner. *Stealing Beauty*. Gimplefilms, London, 2009.

old. Mother needed to sit. Baby needed to feed. Millennial needed to fuck off. She's doing a Lydia in her head, FUCK! Indeed.

provided a series of ready-made domestic sets from which the artist combined performance and proto-documentary film making.



Fig 18 –Lunch, Lydia. *Still from FUCK! 1986*

She went looking for herself. In their deep recesses they think. She becomes compromised. They like to believe in her failure. Perpetuate this filth. Until everyone believes it too. But. She is a threat. Fuck you. She is your cunt. What about her. What about her knowledge. What about her. What about it. You cannot ignore her. This is her resurrection.

Frustrations around the infantilisation of the mother become apparent on visits to exhibitions that run throughout the main document of this chapter, where throughout I weave humiliating experiences of being scolded by gallery staff, to being accompanied out of an exhibition. Humiliation, anger, rage and defiance against obliteration are the

No longer hot. Not dead. Yet. Can't do it. It hurts to be alive and obsolete. Must wait to be asked. What the fuck is that about. Must not show desire, still. Love Dick. Fear. Single. Sexless. Not frustrated, Maybe. Not happy. Not anything. Not dead yet. Forty-six. She was forty-three. She had more kids. Afraid to use her name. Deleted. Moss raged. Raging. Mullaney. Mullaney gives no fucks. Why would she. Her interest in him might insult. No longer fuckable. Death. What of her desire. In the present. Asked that he photograph her. Knew he wouldn't understand. She can't ask him out. Smells great. Strong arms. Northern Adonis. Hotter than hell. So fuckable. Broody. Fucking bio clocks.

Rocked up at the Southbank centre. With infant. Eighth of March. Mind. Centenary. Women of the World festival. Women's hour live. Purcell Room. All women team. Babes in arms. They wouldn't let her in. O'Reilly despaired. No welcome here. Arms full. All female production. Babe might squall. Mother will. For fear of unprofessional doing. Confessional. These bitches were Leaning In. Passed it on to us. Now we use it on each other. Thank you Sheryl.

basis for the work *She Will Never Be A Ballet Dancer*. On one such occasion I rant about the Barbican and another overzealous invigilator.⁶⁵ In Lydia Lunch's performance *Fuck* she goads the audience with expletives, ranting accusations of patriarchal dominance in the face of feminine subjugation.⁶⁶ Performing *She Will Never Be A Ballet Dancer* was equally an act of defiance raging against subordination, aging and the fear of disappearing. The piece was unrehearsed, no training was undertaken in preparation for the performance, the singing is painful to listen to, the performance was an exercise in humiliation and failure.

Luisa Muraro talks about the need for western society to love the mother.⁶⁷ She talks of systematic societal neglect of the mother as one of the main reasons why mothers suffer the fallout for problems that affect our lives, private and public,

⁶⁵ <<https://www.barbican.org.uk/whats-on/2011/event/pioneers-of-the-downtown-scene-new-york-1970s>>, accessed 18/04/19.

⁶⁶ <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDvWrpxpJ8U>>, accessed 17/04/18

⁶⁷ Luisa Muraro, *The Symbolic Order of the Mother*, trans. by Francesca Novello, Albany, NY: State University of New York, 2018.

She wasn't leaning. She was fucking kicking and screaming.

Broadcast it. Feels fucking good to have this platform. Bring the rage in disguise to their doors. They invited us in. They invented us. What the more fuck. I don't understand. Don't they know what we're up to. We're critiquing your fucking lack. We're no threat. They know how this works. Pay us lip service for a while and we'll fuck the fuck off. While the leader of the free world grabs us by the pussy. Now. The silencing continues. Isolated family Units. Solanas knew it then. Fuck them. And her in her attempt to stay alive.

No in your face fuck off Fems there. On radio. Got past the gate keepers. How the fuck. Fucking stories coming out of her ears. Bit of a fucking coup there. We don't kill each other. We comment on the world and love each other. Like good fems artists stick together. Find another way. Never give up. Get past the gate keepers. Peter. Still wondering if she's doing a Mary. Why not. Mother of Christ. Cixous. All the xs.

How the fuck is full time study. P H fucking D needed. A gap in her what.

demonstrated in 2011 when David Cameron blamed single mothers for the London riots in his *Broken Society* speech.⁶⁸ In it he placed 'children without fathers' among the main culprits of the events that raged across London in July of that year.

In *I Love Dick*, Kraus takes humiliation and debasement a step further, as she performs the role of predator, subjecting Dick, the object of her desire, to endless letters confessing how she and her husband felt on spending a night in Dick's home.⁶⁹ She expresses her desire in the pursuit of creativity and intellectual concerns. Already a known filmmaker, Kraus initially intended the efforts of letter writing to be the basis for a film. Dick was a necessary adversary; his refusal to acknowledge her advances fuelled what became an epoch-making work.⁷⁰ Kraus was approaching forty at the time, with her marriage nearing its end. Bold and disturbing, she places

⁶⁸ <<https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/aug/15/david-cameron-riots-broken-society>>, accessed 23/09/17.

⁶⁹ Kraus, Chris, *I Love Dick*, Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e), 2006

⁷⁰ Epoch-making is one of the suggested synonyms for seminal in Microsoft Word.

Are you fucking serious. The only woman at that fucking table. C. V. What does she have to do. Too old, too invisible to suck dick. Obsolete in every way. Part time. In work for four days. OK. Get paid for four fucking days. Right. What. That is full time. Are you fucking, fucking joking. Research not supported but you fucking want it. Not her problem. Became her problem. Needed that mortgage. Couldn't move her child again. Stood up for myself. Felt good for five. Didn't get that one. Either. Fucking job was advertised three times since that shit show. Around that table.

Timing is everything. Babies. When. Career. When. University education. When. Fucking bio clocks again. When. Faith. We are still fucking waiting. Waiting for the right fucking time to do all of this shit. In the wrong order. Heaven fucking knows when this is supposed to take shape. To old now to fuck. Not to be hot. To old now to start again. To fucking old now to start at the fucking start again. Family. Fawcett. One fucking income. Can't afford a shag. Entry level. Too fucking cheap with a family. Out of fucking sync.

female desire at the centre of the work. Kraus' central character Dick is cold, not interested in the ties of family, or sex for that matter, and not interested in her. But Kraus is not asking for a family, only that he fuck her.

Enemies of Good Art, broadcast live on Resonance 104.4FM between October 2010 and September 2012. Discussions were unrehearsed and unscripted; the focus of all broadcasts was the mother, career and family obligations. While most of the broadcasts were hosted by *Enemies'* members, occasionally we invited other women to contribute to the series. In *Motherhood Servitude and The Delegation of Care*, Lisa Baraitser with Imogen Tyler, Gail Lewis, Stella Sandford and Mirca Madianou, discuss the privatisation of maternal labour, from a form of coercion and servitude to current research into global care chains.⁷¹ Under capitalism, maternity is another category of labour and production. domestic labour debates changed views on maternal labour as one of drudgery to a form of labour in a

⁷¹ Global care chains refer to women who leave their own children to look after the children of wealthy families.

Walked away in the rain. Wish she hadn't put those fucking shoes on. They didn't look at her feet. He did check her out before she left. Skin crawl. Dress like a fucking nun. While he salivates over her naked arms. No home for research here. No dignity either. Definitely Not Dick. Chris. The pills have yet to kick in. No wonder no one wants to own this shit. Can't have all that humiliation. Or epoch-making.

Shulie saw this coming. Radical solution. W-i-p-e-o-u-t . This acid spittin man hating bitch is not going quietly. If she has to. Sub-urb-ia. She's going solo. Will drag herself there. Not you. Headspace. Let her genius flow. Declare her. She fires this. R-I-P-O-N. Got there on her own. Safer to be a single pringle. For fear of parochial doing. Kid loves it. Mother makes it. It being art. All happy then. Fucking anecdotes. Why so many of them. Is this anecdotal. Jane would know. Is this where we get to with this. Can't not tell the personal. Still political. Not that you would know it.

Baltic, Gateshead. Young artists award. Kids long past toddling. Wanted to taste independence. She wanted to taste art.

capitalist formula. The demise of mothers was something that Firestone predicted in *The Dialectic of Sex*, where she argues that the nuclear family is dangerous for women which sees them being 'dragged off to the suburbs'. Firestone sees this as a return to a form of domestic servitude through marriage.⁷²

The Fawcett Society commissioned research on low income families and child poverty in 2008.⁷³ At the time of the report, The Fawcett Society stated that on average 30,000 women lose their jobs after having children, a figure they repeated in 2013, which they predicted to rise. In 2018 Jacqueline Rose *Mother's: An Essay on Love and Hate*, claimed that figure to be 58,000.⁷⁴ In 2015 Sheryl Sandberg suggested that women needed to take responsibility for their own failings and pull up to the

⁷² Firestone, Shulamith, *The Dialectic of Sex : The Case for Feminist Revolution*, London: The Women's Press, 1979

⁷³ <<https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=355a7eee-9eb3-4715-bc97-f28ed9dc6b73> > – accessed on 12/03/19

⁷⁴ Rose, Jacqueline, *Mothers: An Essay on Love and Cruelty*, London: Faber & Faber, 2018.

Small Prick with name badge wanted to exercise his soft power. Another millennial male offered to throw an eye over them while she studied the work. Followed, again by Small Prick. Robotic officious health and safety bullshit imparted in her direction. Made his fucking day. Threats, passive aggressive like a good conformist. Delusional fool, the art world is no bohemian, cool, liberal haven. Its pure capital, and you Small Prick are just another insignificant underpaid replaceable cog. Frogmarched to the lift, consoled themselves with ice cream. Another great art experience.

For Cunt's Sake. (Cixous). The paradigm shift required is too paradigm. Radical didn't get much traction. Will it this time round. Visual seduction worked for a while. So fucking beautiful they can't fucking see. Turn in. So fucking clever they can't fucking think. So fucking wordy they can't fucking read. Don't mention the word, till you make it sexy. How to do that is another story. Mother the fuck out of this art. And watch it bomb.

Matricentric feminism is a logical place to go to. A reaction against our exclusion. A fuck you to the institutions

corporate table, lean in to the conversation.⁷⁵

In *I Love Dick* Kraus uncomfortably presents the reader with her desire, and eventually her debasement played out in public. Kraus uses debasement as a form of creative expression, an act of self-knowing, of exploring her vulnerability but also an act of owning her desire. The debasement of mothers as reflected in this thesis is not one of empowerment, but as demonstrated here, is one of continued hostility toward the mother. Groundbreaking at the time of writing it continues to test the boundaries of what a woman can/should do in terms of art making. Kraus confronts desire and humiliation as autobiography, in direct opposition to Zoe Moss, whose real name and choice of career she keeps from us. In *Risking Who One Is* Rubin is talking about the risk of maternity, one and the same thing with Kraus, except Kraus remained childless.⁷⁶ In Kraus' case, the risk of debasement is worth the eventual

⁷⁵ Sandberg, Sheryl, *Lean In, Women, Work and The Will to Lead*, London: WH Allen, 2015

⁷⁶ Rubin Suleiman, Susan, *Risking Who One Is: Encounters With Contemporary Art And Literature*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1994

that have fucked us over. Our sisters ffs who have thought us uncool. Following the dominator model. Mothers themselves or daughters of them. Make it a politic. Separate from other arguments. Isolating mumas. Again. A natural progression. She gets it. Until when. Still out in the cold. Hidden again by her own frustrations. Hidden under a patriarchal superstructure. Sorkin.

She prances round her house now. Second hairy baby. Surrogates. Four beating hearts now. Too human. Fucking boobs never looked better. This pill is working. Fucking painful tho. For what. That ship has sailed. Can talk now of maternal ambivalence. And binary. Fuck binary. Can let go of the desire for more beating hearts. Can embrace the half century mark. With what. With hope for the future her. Not likely. Will disappear if she is not strategic. Schmooze. Get out. Be fucking seen. Lick arse till it hurts. With a fucking smile on your face. Rock up and get those intros. Sucking up is her debasement now. Will have to find another. Output.

Wakefield, Hepworth. Szapocznikow last day. Workshops. No more fucking art carts. Can't leave the nine-year-old. Have to stay in a two-hour work shop gluing shitty pieces of paper together. Nothing they can't do at home. Making art with kids is boring as fuck. Don't want to hang with these over privileged darlings. Darling. She wanted to see the fucking art. Where's the crèche? (Enemies Pop Up Tate) Where is the fucking crèche? More health and safety monologues. Zoned out. Again. But you cannot ignore her. The substratum. Again. Irigaray. And. Her. leash. Again.

payoff, that being the resulting work and its place in feminist art.

I use Shulamith (Shulie) Firestone as an example of provocation, in language (as used in Chapter 2), but also in what Firestone identifies as class oppression when thinking about the subjugation of women and children. This comes out of the development of the nuclear family. Under patriarchy, a system of subjugation and co-dependency slowly developed where both women and children rely on each other for any number of reasons, mainly to do with a sense of societal position in mothers, and for the child, survival.

Chapter Six

Usually she is disappointed, Matka

In 2018 I was invited by Artwall Gallery, Prague to produce a series of works for exhibition. Artwall Gallery occupies six former communist poster sites overlooking the city. I was asked to consider a wide public audience in response to my current research on feminism and maternity. I produced five black and white posters, made up of one large photographic image each with the words mother and matka (Czech for mother) repeated across all five works, occupying the lower part of the frame. The images appropriated for the works were all sourced from the internet and were of: The Virgin Mary, Beyoncé pregnant, Catherine Opie, *Self Portrait Nursing*, 2005, Kate Middleton with child in arms beside her husband and a Victorian studio portrait of a headless woman holding an infant, anonymous, date unknown. I looked towards cultural representations of the mother. Not representations of mother and child and not images of childbirth. In this work I question contemporary maternal icons.

Mirror

Usually she is disappointed, Matka

Andrea Liss does not mention the canon directly; in *Feminist Art and The Maternal* she does, however, look for a feminist maternal in art practice by suggesting that ‘reconceiving the maternal as new bodies of feminist knowledge offers revolutionary ways for rethinking human relationships and creating new forms of maternal culture’.⁷⁷ Where might these new forms of maternal culture operate, in the context of feminist art shows and gallery spaces? Or can they potentially infiltrate a contemporary art world without the labels ‘feminist’ and ‘maternal’? What happens to work of a work of art derived from feminist maternal subjectivity when we try to remove these labels? The introduction to the book mentions anecdotal experiences of where the mother is not included in expected feminist collections. Liss recounts a conversation she had with a colleague on her research for this book,

⁷⁷ Liss, Andrea. *Feminist Art and the Maternal*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009.

The breast-feeding mother as queer, overweight and tattooed. The blessed Virgin, Mary Mother of Christ, Our Lady, the virtuous icon as portrayed in Christianity more specifically, Catholicism. The disturbing image of the headless mother, popular in Victorian portrait photography, where the mother is utilised as a prop to support her child. The impossible mother, the disturbing fifties housewife-esque perfection of Kate Middleton. And, Beyoncé, black, self-made pop-cultural icon, the first woman to perform pregnant at the Grammys.

during which it was suggested that she ‘risked reifying essentialism’.⁷⁸ Liss, like Andrea Rich before her, wanted to write a book on motherhood as a ‘*relatively unexplored area of feminist theory*’ arguing the case for a greater understanding of the work of feminist arts working in and of the maternal. The book by her own admission pays tribute to the early mothers of the women’s

⁷⁸ At the conference Motherhood and Creative Practice, University South Bank, June 2015, Liss confided that the colleague was the renowned feminist and art historian Amelia Jones.



Fig 19 – Mullaney, Martina. *Usually she is disappointed, Matka*, Artwall Gallery, Prague 2018

The state was not interested. Again. You're going through a break up love, they said. London only works if you've got your shit together. Good Neoliberals. Sorted. Moving every two weeks. Until. Packington. Estate. Demolition. Crack pipes outside our door. Child hated Claudie house. Child cried every evening on the way home. Mother cried all the fucking time. Didn't sign up for this. Career in tatters. What career. Can't afford more childcare for evening events. The Art World happens at bed time. Evening paid work another fucking ball ache. No one will mind her. The family that do are juggling princesses who object. Not worth working, cost of getting out the door too great. What The Fuck. How are we supposed to do this. New home at last. Not making art work now. How to keep this roof over my head. He fucked off back to France to take care of himself. The French don't have a moral compass. Stabat Mater. Mother was definitely the whore in this scenario. The Irish love a virtuous virgin too. Mascaraed on the site of patriarchy. No love here. This mother was not loved. Muraro, loves the mother. She's dead, we're killing her. The substratum again. Love the women who maintain it. Why can't they see. They

movement that did not turn away from motherhood; as a result the book begins by engaging the usual list of established artists that have made work on the subject from that period: Mary Kelly, Laura Mulvey, Susan Hiller, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, later Renee Cox and Catherine Opie. She does however go on to explore the work of the lesser well-known art collectives such as 'Mother Art', still active and operating under two of the original members from a group that comprised seven at its height in the mid'70s; and in the late 1990s M.A.M.A. (Mother Artists Making Art) and their performances around breast-feeding. Without exception, all the artists included have made work on the body constructed around the mother-child experience. What the book does not ask is, how from a more sociological enquiry, works of art can address imbalances in the art world, looking at women artists who are also mothers and their careers and the representation of women making work around motherhood, not necessarily work that is body centric.

The Hackney Flashers Collective was formed in 1974. Its first exhibition, *Women and Work* (1975), used documentary

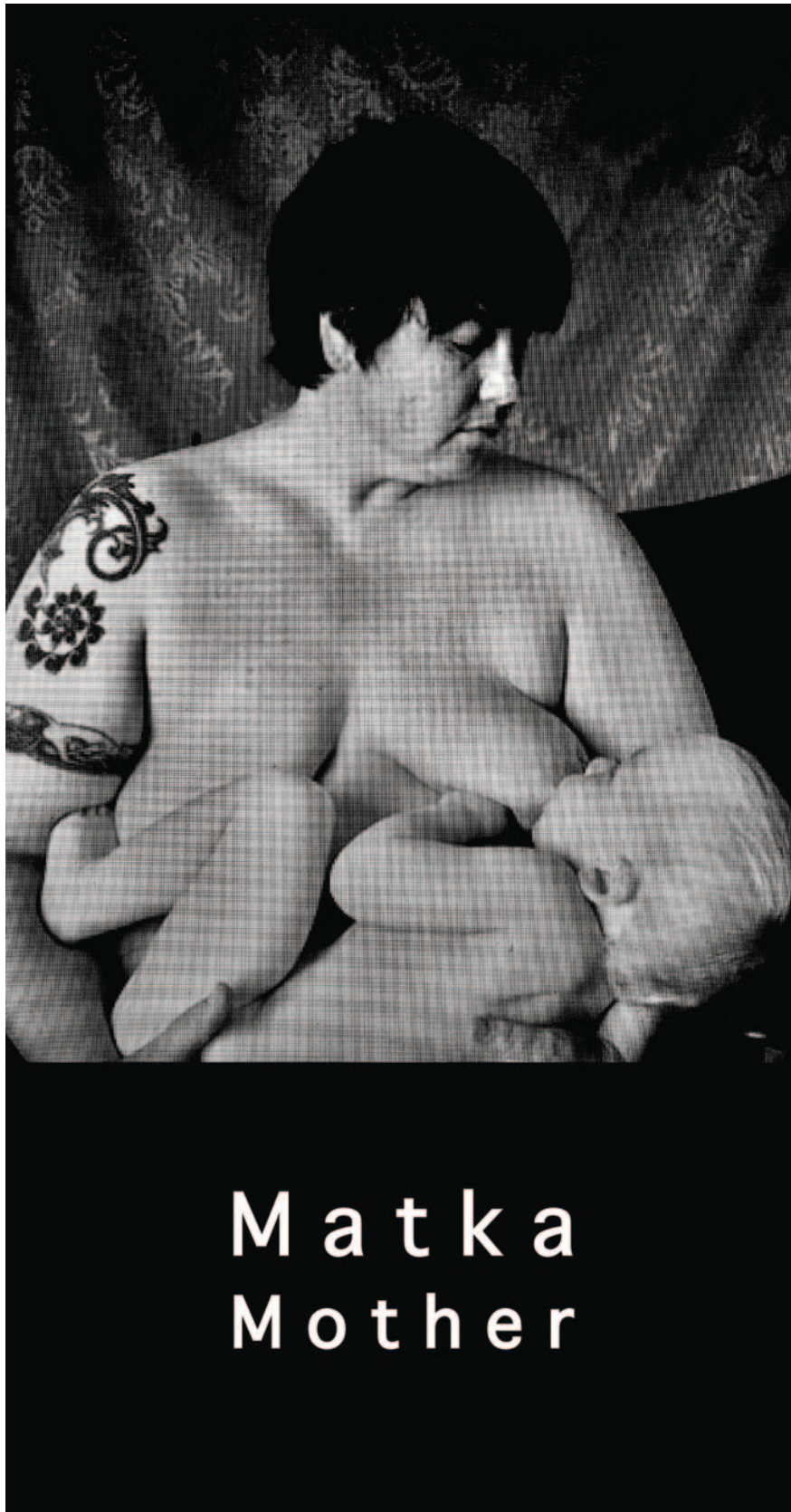


Fig 20 – Mullaney, Martina. *Usually she is disappointed, Matka*, Artwall Gallery, Prague 2018

don't want to. Fucking brainwashed. Its easier not to think.

Nope. All but forgotten. Silenced. Feels good to disappear for a time. Not forever. Recharge. I was doing a Louise. Used to disappear to make work. Ripon is risky. Do what the fuck you like in New York with a wealthy husband. Get liberated. Not liberal. No time for those fucking bleedin heart bastards. Red all th20way. And giving no fucks. That's how she did it. Hélène says you can come back from death. I believe her. All Helens are not of Troy.

Who's Holding The Baby. Collective. Angry. Fucked off even. Made no difference to them whither great fem writers included them or not. Makes a difference now. They wanted to work. Many of them never been to art fucking school. What did they know. A campaign. Political. Not art. This was no fucking p-arty. The house over here didn't debate it. Not much debated since. This was pure and simple need. They needed to work. They looked at others around them that needed to too. Hackney. Flashed. Activism and art making. We still need to work.

photography with explanatory text. The second exhibition, *Who's Holding the Baby?* (1978), arose from a critical evaluation of *Women and Work*, in particular the omission from this exhibition of the crucial importance of childcare provision in the lives of working women. There was then, as now, little publicly funded childcare in Britain. The lives of working women had provided a suitable subject for documentary photographs. The absence of childcare facilities, however, did not. *Who's Holding the Baby?* aimed to explore the need for childcare provision and the repercussions of its absence on mothers, children and the wider society. It addressed complex ideas about women's roles as mothers and as workers inside and outside the home. This required the use of additional tools: illustration, collage using advertising imagery and graphics. This feminist critique was intended as an agitprop (agitation propaganda) tool to be deployed in a range of settings, among them women's liberation conferences, trade union meetings, libraries and institutions concerned with social policy. The work positions itself between photojournalistic and conceptual art



Fig 21 – Image taken from the internet of Neneh Cherry

Neneh Cherry. Top of the Fucking Pops. This teenager was blown away. Not a fucking clue why. Why would she be in awe of a pregnant belly. Short skirt and denim jacket. Balls as big as her medallion. Rocking that screen. More than a blessed virgin. This one she could worship. Vanessa Williams. She is visible but she's not seen. Art and maternity. I will have to go there. All the work after Enemies. All the work she loathes. She is beautiful and she is laughing (Freeman) She doesn't know it. This art is about her, I disagree. She's screaming.

practices. Throughout its period of activism, from 1974 to 1980, some twenty members were involved in the Hackney Flashers Collective. Those who produced *Who's Holding the Baby?* were An Dekker, Sally Greenhill, Liz Heron, Michael Ann Mullen, Maggie Murray, Christine Roche, Jo Spence and Julia Vellacott. The original exhibition of *Who's Holding the Baby?* consisted of twenty-nine panels. The Museo Reina Sofia holds a later version with twenty-three panels.

'I affirm that knowing how to love the

She may not have her tits out but this is about her.³⁶ She has become a dirty word. Not sexy dirty. Just dirty. How do we make her hot. She never was. Holy not hot. His plan for her. Sexy when she's angry, though, still, again.

Up against it. Art and feminism. Art fems won't ignore her. She thought. She thought the world around art was freedom. Second only to the university. Both dedicated to the cause of learning. Living. Enlightenment. Liberated. The intelligentsia would never do this to them. Creativity. Freedom. Fucked up capitalist riddled corporate nightmares. And you don't have a fucking clue till you have a baby. Fucked if she can tell you that she saw this coming. She calls it

³⁶ I drove from North Yorkshire to meet with a feminist curator who teaches at Goldsmiths University of London with the 200 framed works that make up the installation *Usually she is disappointed*, as described in the introduction to chapter one. On seeing the work the curator seemed disappointed, somehow the work was not maternal enough for her. I had deliberately not included images of birth, or children, the images included are not bodycentric though they do refer to the political nature of mothering, by including references to lack of state funding for childcare, abortion rights, mothering experience as difficult, domesticity, feminist theory and melancholy.

mother creates symbolic order. As I see it, this is the implicit, measure, and purpose of the women's movement that began at the end of the seventies.⁷⁹ I disagree with Muraro here; learning to love the mother was never implicit in the women's movement of the 1970s and the art that is derived from much political feminist activism that came out of it as I describe in chapter one. While childcare was a concern for some women as demonstrated through the Hackney Flashers and their campaign *Who's Holding the Baby?* for affordable childcare and featured in the work of Laura Mulvey's *Riddles of The Sphinx*, it was never the rallying cry of the movement. The film *The Night Cleaners* by the Berwick Street Collective talked about the lives of the women who worked all night and took care of their husbands and families during the day; the main concern of the film was not affordable childcare.⁸⁰ The objective of the film was to highlight the need to unionise the sector; not an unworthy

⁷⁹ Muraro, Louisa, *The Symbolic Order of the Mother*, trans. By Francesca Novello, Albany, NY: State University of New York, 2018. P 20

⁸⁰ Collective, Berwick St. *The Nightcleaners*. The LUX, London, 1975.

‘Motherhood studies’. Described Matricentric Feminism (also her term) as a ‘*distinct political theory for and about mothers*’.³⁷ She says that academic feminism has forgotten or omitted the mother. Holy Fuck. She says we need new feminism. Consider the mother. In theory and practice. From that of ‘woman’ to that of the ‘mother’.³⁸ Holy fuck. Holy fucking fuck. At last.

Their efforts made little difference. Neoliberalism was coming. They didn’t know it yet (the liberation movement and how feminism went underground into the academe). Thatcher didn’t have a word for it then. We know what the fuck to call it now, ‘tho. Don’t we. Never a good time to have a baby. Fucking great. Highest in fucking Europe. Middle class, middle aged mummies out of work in their thousands. Can’t afford to. No

³⁷ Richter, Shira, ‘Academic Feminism Ignores Motherhood - Says Dr. Andrea O’Reilly to Shira Richter #3.’ YouTube. November 12, 2016. Posted November 24, 2016. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IbGn9LPolzQ>>.

³⁸ Gift Economy. “Andrea O’Reilly – Ain’t I a Feminist? Matricentric Feminism, Feminist Mamas and Why Mothers Need...” YouTube. September 23, 2015. Posted November 24, 2016. <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=miep_ohkzEY>.

cause, but not one that directly addressed why these women needed to work through the night in the first place. The lack of state-funded childcare for women working in low paid jobs, meant that they had to find work that fit with their family obligations. It also meant that for women forced to work unsocial hours, many of them missed out on being with their children.⁸¹

Post-Partum Document is an exceptional work, for the fact that it transcended the boundaries of its own audience. It is a work that spans minimalism, conceptualism, maternity, installation and feminism. Catherine Opie’s performative *Self Portrait, Nursing* (2004) brands herself a pervert and photographs herself nursing her big healthy toddler. Lenka Clayton practice incorporates her life at home battling with child and practice, which she turned into a funded residency, that experience of practice, art and life, with Kellyesque minimalist attention to small detail and the detritus of her working life.

⁸¹ For an account on the film *The Night Cleaners*, and the struggle to unionise the sector see Shelia Rowbotham, *Jolting Memory: Nightcleaners Recalled*, in <<https://libcom.org/files/NightCleaners.pdf>>.

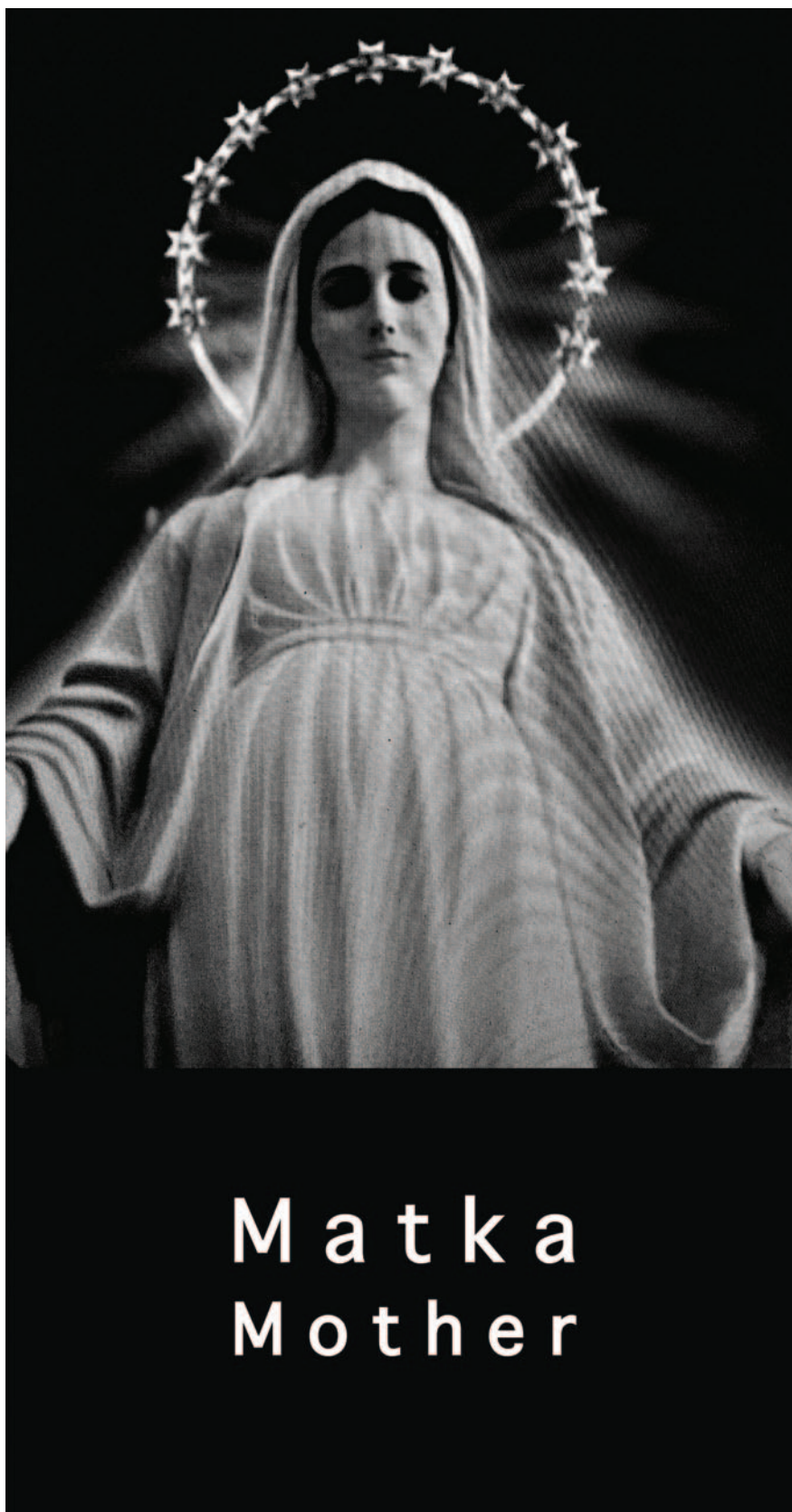


Fig 22 – Mullaney, Martina. *Usually she is disappointed, Matka*, Artwall Gallery, Prague 2018

one wants to mind your fucking brats. The state is not interested. Again. This isn't austerity (The Fawcett Society). This is something else. The leash. Again. What fucking income. Precarity once felt liberating, didn't give a fuck about much back then. This was before the L...mann Brothers (recession and the resulting impact on women, Rose quote 54K women (mothers) lose their jobs every year). Fuckers. Still in their jobs and getting rewarded extras for it. We're screwed. And not how we want to be. Having a man doesn't seem to help much these days. Not good enough.

Maternal Bodies. Artists celebrating her fertility. Not this one. She is beautiful and she is laughing. She doesn't know it. This art is about her, I disagree. She's screaming. She may not have her tits out but this is about her. She has become a dirty word. Not sexy dirty. Just dirty. How do we make her hot. She never was. Holy not hot. His plan for her. Sexy when she's angry, though, still, again. (the maternal as rejected by the institution).

She said she wasn't angry. (Solanas SCUM) Don't believe it. She said it was strategic. Literary device. Had no kids.



Fig 26 – Opie, Catherine. *Self Portrait Nursing*, 2004

Enemies of Good Art held its first meeting in 2009. By 2011 other groups were forming and hosting their own discursive/art events on the subject of the family and the art world. These groups included Crib Notes as discussed in chapter 4,⁸² organised by Kim Dhillon; it was a series of curator-led talks at the Whitechapel Gallery to accompany each of their main exhibitions. The public were encouraged to bring their children (under five) from 10 to 11 am (before

⁸² <https://www.whitechapelgallery.org/learn/families-and-children/> accessed on 18/03/22

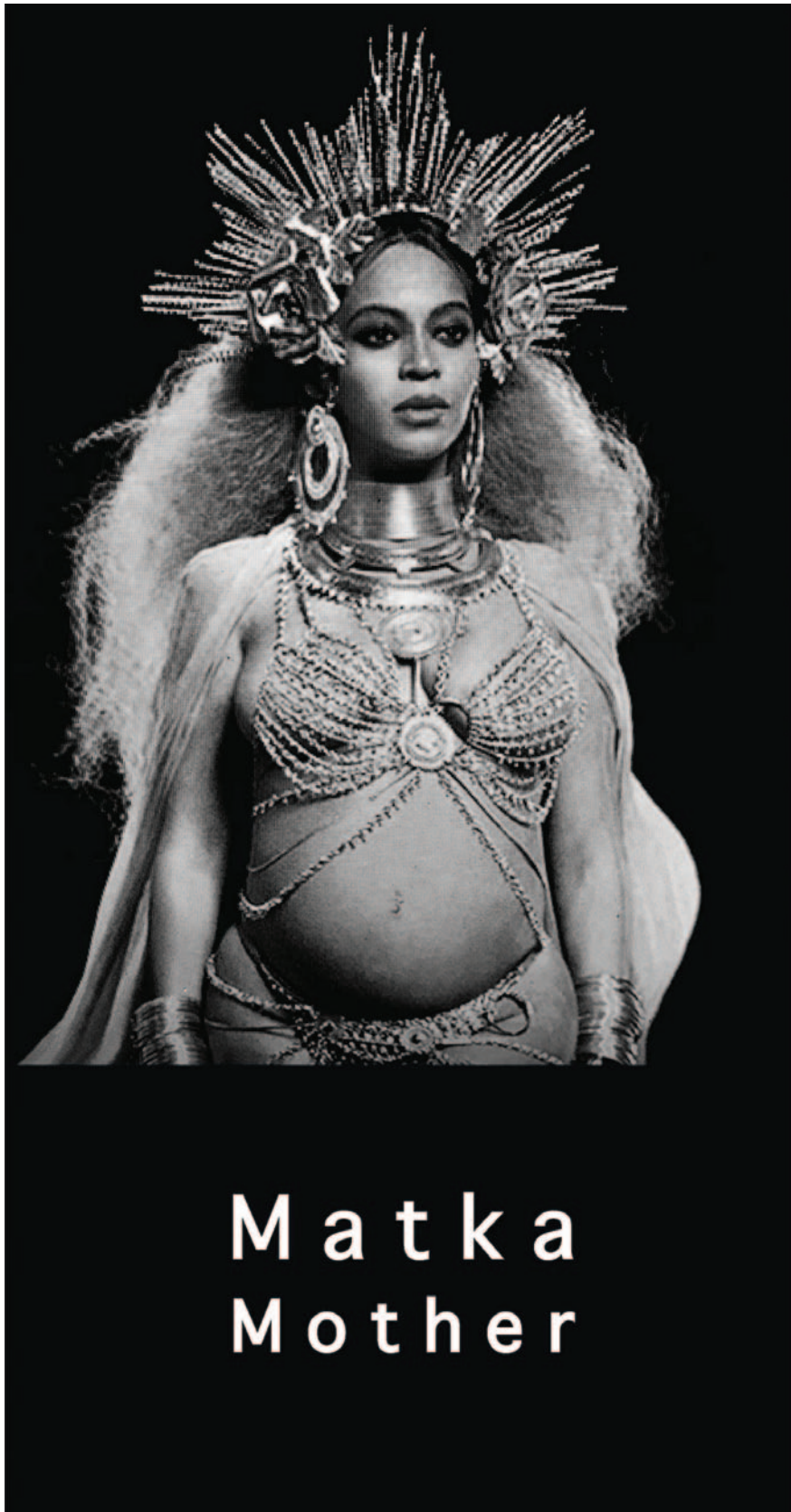


Fig 23 – Mullaney, Martina. *Usually she is disappointed, Matka*, Artwall Gallery, Prague 2018

Followed the genius. Got no where too.
She wanted to be him. Had to fuck him
a million times just to survive. She was
the genius.

opening to the public) for a walk around
the exhibition with the curator followed
by a short question and answer session.
There were no men in attendance on the
day I was there. Andrea Franke began

her project, *Invisible Spaces of Parenthood, a collection of pragmatic solutions for a better future*, while an undergraduate student at Chelsea College of Art in 2010 when the college, after a brief consultation period, elected to close the nursery. This action made eight workers redundant and left twenty-two families (including Franke) without childcare. In response, as a political act, Franke produced a temporary crèche as part of her degree show. The project went on to have further incarnations at The Show Room Gallery in London, where the artist explored alternative possibilities of childcare, child play, and parenthood.⁸³

The Birth Rites Collection at Salford University claims to be the only collection in the UK solely dedicated to the subject of childbirth. The collection was founded by artist and curator Helen Knowles after the birth of her second child in 2006 when Knowles began to explore public representations of childbirth within her own practice. Brood Work (2009) is a project based in Los Angeles, the work of artists Iris Anna Regn and Rebecca Niederlander, where they promote the interconnectedness of creative life and family life. Their collective group shows aimed to show works made by artists after the onset of parenthood, and not about parenthood itself. Their work is not confined to women only and it does not promote a feminist agenda. The Mothership Project,⁸⁴ Ireland, first met in 2013, and describe themselves as a network of Irish parenting visual artists and arts workers; their activities include meetings, lectures and actions, while drawing attention to unworkable networking opportunities

⁸³ Franke, Andrea. *Invisible Spaces of Parenthood: A Collection of Pragmatic Propositions for a Better Future*. n.p., n.d.

⁸⁴ The Mothership Project.” November 18, 2016, <<https://themothershipproject.wordpress.com/>>, accessed November 24, 2016.

for those with children. ‘Cultural ReProducers’⁸⁵ is a US-based online community of cultural workers; its central focus is the cultural sector and it addresses the need for a more family-friendly policy from cultural institutions. Set up by artist Christa Donner, in Chicago, the Cultural ReProducers website acts as a repository of information on all things relating to the challenges of being a parent in the cultural sector. The website contains an exhaustive list of publications, exhibitions, and essays on the subject. Other recent similar initiatives include ‘The Procreate Project’,⁸⁶ and the development of its physical space, ‘The Mother House’ in East London. This last project took its lead from Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro’s ‘Woman House’ 1972. Other notable internet-based projects utilising social media as a platform for the promotion and the dissemination of information include ‘Artist as Mother as Artist’,⁸⁷ Digital Institute for Early Parenthood⁸⁸, (formally Project Afterbirth), Desperate Artwives⁸⁹, Mewe⁹⁰, Motherhood: A Social Practice⁹¹, Artists Parents Index⁹². There also existed at the time of writing emergent Individual practices such as Lenka Clayton in the US and her residency/project under the name Artists Residency in Motherhood.⁹³ Clayton organised her studio practice around the demands of motherhood, secured funding and built a website to document the process. The result was a series of works generated from her experiences of early motherhood.

⁸⁵ “Cultural ReProducers.” July 7, 2016, <<http://www.culturalreproducers.org/?m=1>>, accessed November 24, 2016.

⁸⁶ “Natural Time of Creativity”. August 1, 2016. <<http://www.procreateproject.com/>>, accessed November 24, 2016.

⁸⁷ Accessed November 24, 2016. <<https://m.facebook.com/artistasmotherasartist/>>.

⁸⁸ “Digital Institute for Early Parenthood”, 2016, <<http://www.diep.org.uk/>>, accessed November 24, 2016.

⁸⁹ “Desperate Artwives”. <http://www.desperateartwives.co.uk/Desperate_Artwives/Home.html>, accessed November 24, 2016.

⁹⁰ Mewe. “About.” 2012, <<http://meweart.org/>>, accessed November 24, 2016.

⁹¹ “Motherhood: A Social Practice”, 2014, <<http://motherhoodasocialpractice.org/>>, accessed November 24, 2016.

⁹² Artist Parent Index, <<http://artistparentindex.com>>, accessed November 24, 2016.

⁹³ See Lenka Clayton Residency, <<http://residencyinmotherhood.com/>>, accessed November 24, 2016.

Chapter Seven

A Pissertation

You dream, ‘The table is round. I speak louder and louder to drown out the noise, I piss harder and harder I speak louder and louder, it takes on the force of a waterfall, hide it, I speak more and more firmly, a hydrant gushing great streams, the discourse is philosophical, hide it, what excess, all eyes on me, a pissertation, what will the outcome be?’ Dreamed.³⁹

This rant. This rant is angry. This rant is not hopeful. This rant wants you to know it. This rant is about the mother. She being forgotten. Have been obliterated. Rendered obsolete. Not having it, negated. Like that’s alright. Like fuck. It is. This rant is angry. This rant is ranting. This rant is not hopeful. You may not want it. Neither does she. She is missing.

Child sick, I’m so sorry. Never in my life have I been offered so much money. Not today either. Still burning up. He. Somewhat sympathetic. Need the money. Campylobacter. Again, camp-pylo-bacter. Cam-plyo-fucking-what. Child about to combust. Hottest week of the fucking year. Small flat feels smaller. What to do. Phone. Hydrate. Don’t panic, do panic. He long gone not a word till this has blown over. Bastard. Again. Single mother artists. Struggling. What family life, and art making. Is this art. Bloody art now. Run reds. Get to the people who know. She’s her usual self, if red. It takes more than a village. No help here form the sisterhood.⁴⁰Don’t know where to find the sisterhood in this place. Where is utopia. ‘A Swiss friend called about Utopia. Who can say what it is. For utopia asks that all activity be considered as a social project, as an ideal for relations between people. Is

³⁹ Cixous, Hélène, *Coming to Writing and Other Essays*, ed. and trans. by Deborah Jenson *et al.*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991, p. 54.

⁴⁰ Fraser, Nancy, *Fortunes of Feminism: from State Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis*, London: Verso, 2013, p. 71.

the work of art between people or before them? Is there a position or an opposition?’⁴¹

Fucking paid work. Unpaid work. All fucking work. Who gives a shit. Christ on a bike. Child on the back. Cheapest form of transport. Efficient. Dangerous. Avoid battles with rammed buses. Get to work on time. Get to childcare – on time. Risk being told off, again. Infantilised. Again. Who’s the fucking child here. Running the gauntlet. Oxford Street in the morning. Wigmore on the return. Not enough time between destinations. Women running both. Waiting for me to fuck up, again. Watching clocks. Irigaray, bring on the revolution. The Substratum is depressing. The Substratum is killing us. They should know better. Where are all the feminists? ‘The man-god-father killed the mother in order to take power. And isn’t there a fluidity, some flood, that could shake the social order? And if we make the foundations of the social order shift, then everything will shift. This is why they are careful to keep us on a leash...’⁴²

Shero. Heroines rising, million women rising. The fight-back. Her days of pounding the streets are long gone... for now. Tried it for a while. Had to do something with all this pent up energy. Couldn’t fuck. No self respecting male would go near her. She was young enough not to care. London felt carnivalesque for a while. Hope. Is this what it was like. Nostalgia for the future. Wanted to do as they had done before. Art and activism. To feel good.

The wrong kind of feminist. Eco Fems. Gender neutral fems. Academic Fems. Clever. Activist Fems. Zena. He for She fem, the chick from Harry Potter is fucking mad. Domestic fems, What did Justin Trudeau’s Missus say.⁴³ Fems of Colour. Arty Fems.

⁴¹ Nesbit, Molly, *Midnight the Tempest Essays*, New York: Inventory Press, 2017, p. 181.

⁴² Irigaray Reader, ed., Margaret Whitford, Oxford: Blackwell, 1995, p 47

⁴³ To celebrate International Women’s Day 2017, the wife of the Canadian President Justin Trudeau, Sophie Trudeau, suggested that on this day women celebrate the men in their lives.

<<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/08/canada-sophie-gregoire-trudeau-international-womensday-men>>, accessed 04/03/17.

Fems form the Stars, coming out of the woodworks asking black ladies to get on their board, Alabama Worley. Sandberg and Slaughter. Ha. Neoliberal Fems. Fuck off. Cultural Fems. Marxist Fems. Abolitionist Fems. Non Aligned Fems. Liberal Fems. Separatists Fems. Fuck off. Revisionist Fems. Post Structuralist Fems. Transcendental Fems. Xeno Fems. Not Zena. No warrior in a corset. Why so many fems. We need. We need a revolution. Bring on a fucking revolution. Great mothers screaming to be heard. All screaming in the same direction.

Something needs stirring we're being hung out to dry. And I'm not talking about drying up. They're closing our institutions. And I'm not only talking only about the art ones. The life line. The shower before them called it a sure start. And it surely was for a time. No this is not a matriarchal wet dream. This is London, our sisters are not coming. They can't. They have been sliced up, butchered, separated, frog marched into individualisation.⁴⁴

Those two bitches made my life hell. No – you – can – not – drop – your – child – at – eight – twenty – five. Yes – you – must – wait – with – her – till – eight – thirty. Bitch sitting in the office waiting for my sweaty humiliated red face, again. Fifteen minutes late. Every day. I can't stay on this path. Was a self-confessed man hater. Hate the fucking world now. Where can we escape to. Where can we outrun patriarchy, capitalism, neoliberalism. Separatism. The fucking moon.⁴⁵

Broadcast it. Feels fucking good to have this platform. Bring the rage in disguise to

⁴⁴ Fraser, Nancy, *Fortunes of Feminism: from State Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis*, London:Verso, 2013

I make reference to neoliberalism here and its effects on community, activism and feminism, where Nancy Fraser argues the reprivatisers (i.e. neoliberals) have denounced the mantra/claim of 70s feminism, that the personal is political, the personal is now a private matter, and with that so are the issues that drove the activism of the Women's Liberation Movement.

⁴⁵ I draw on Firestone and Solanas heavily in this chapter. My style of writing and the frustrations I repeat make reference to the radical solutions to the problems of patriarchy, as proposed by both. For a world where the only possible solution has to be a radical and violent one. Separatism on a grand scale.

their doors. They invited us in. They invented us. What the more fuck. I don't understand. Don't they know what were up to. We're critiquing your fucking lack. We're no threat. They know how this works. Pay us lip service for a while and we'll fuck the fuck off. The wave is killing us. Kill the waves. In it for the long haul. Stay angry she said. She said anger is good. She should know, read all the books, knows how the psyche works. I'm still learning.

Childcare ends at 5.45. Yes I need to leave at 4.30. No, I don't have family in this country. No dad lives two hundred and thirty three fucking miles away. Yes, I have to leave at 4.30, everyday. No I don't have time for lunch. You have overloaded my schedule. No I can't get into work at 8.30. No I don't have childcare from 7.30. Half-term. Nightmare. Why only for three days. Why not a full day. My working week has not changed. Can't rock up an hour later. Can't return an hour earlier. This is the leash. Childcare provision is a tease. This good fifty-two year old virgin doesn't give a fuck. Neoliberal scum. How are we supposed to do this. State doesn't give a fuck. This dick doesn't give a fuck. School doesn't give a fuck. I give no FUCKS anymore.⁴⁶

Corbyn, Jeremy. Looking even hotter. On train. Holding a baby. Baby looks pleased. The return of the left. Like a fucking dream after these cunts. Socialism. Another dirty word. Frightens the fuck out of them. Fucking hope so, these right wing bastards are killing us. They pour scorn over the single mother. She wants to slit her wrists. Won't let her. Can't. Love her too much. Why is everyone afraid of socialism?

What's with all the biologicals. Disguised anger. We know where it comes from.⁴⁷ Still angry. That could be good. Ape western white males and get it. Adored. Fucked. Be like them. Be them. Fuck them. Minimal. Conceptual. Sexy. Cool. Available, brilliant

⁴⁶ McRobbie, Angela, *Feminism and The New Mediated Maternalism, Human Capital at Home*. <<http://research.gold.ac.uk/9405/>>, accessed 03/06/18.

I make reference to the professionalisation of all aspects of our lives, echoed in Nancy Fraser earlier. The middleclass professional woman as the conduit by which neoliberal feminism is gaining traction, in the UK and also the United States.

⁴⁷ Making reference to the Feminist Avant Garde, performance art of the 1970s.

and dedicated. Cocks. Don't ape Western White Males and get it wrong. Mother crude ugly care. Bloody. Visceral. No thinking required. In your face ripped open vaginas. Body parts galore. Got my own trauma to deal with. Know what fucked up mess your body is. We used to talk about how your husband doesn't give a shit about your labour (Fraser). We still need to talk about how your husband gets to have his fucking career. And fuck you. You're still a scrubber. Babe. We're all scrubbers.

Have to leave London or die trying. Reaching for the bottle. Daily. Still breast feeding. Four. Helps us sleep/no/sleep. Sleep. Take every opportunity. Stay visible. Why. Mortgage needs it. Profile needs it. Work less. Rely on the state more. Bullshit, the state is not interested. Single. Supplement. Suspended. Fucking Neoliberals. Single mothers deleted.⁴⁸ Again. Felt like a burden. Not technically homeless but couldn't go home. You're going through a breakup love. Two expensive degrees. Stop balling. Return, kick him out. Its just another fight. Homeless. Bags packed. Child in arms. We're out. No plan. Emergency, at the mercy of friends/friends of/friends/friends. Did I end up here. What The Fuck. Panic. Can't breath. Disarmed.⁴⁹

Shoot the fuckers who won't let her in. She did. Still got no where. Learned Fems tried to claim her. She was having non of it. Feral. She was having none of it. In a class of her own. A time of her own. Another fucking room of her fucking own. On her own. They were not friends. Solanas and Firestone. Didn't need to be. Probable. What do I know I wasn't there. Not romanticising after these two. She was a bitch and she knew it. She owned it. An other call to arms. So to speak. For all the fucking

⁴⁸ Luisa Muraro in *The Symbolic Order of the Mother* returned to her origins in philosophy. In order to love the mother she has to rethink her whole understanding of philosophy's indoctrination of her under a system of patriarchal intent. Turning what she has learned as a scholar and philosopher into a positive force, in which to overthrow already established notions of the mother, to which she confesses to indulging in former writing. Since her epiphany in 1991 when she wrote *The Symbolic Order of the Mother*. Interestingly it has been translated into and published in other European languages; German 1993, Spanish in 1994, French 2003 but not into English until 2018.

⁴⁹ Muraro argues that as a society (I understand that to be an interpretation of western society in this case), we negate the position of the mother, a deliberate act, orchestrated to disarm her.

good it did. And bad tempered fems were rocking it. Then. They didn't want us to disappear. No fucking Sub Burbs for them. Nope. And yet. Everyone uses it. Feminists hoodwinked by the fucking term. Apparently no other word will do. Incomparable. Derived from semen, fucking semen. Fem writers using it to describe fem art work. What the fucking fuck. No seminalis here. Genitive seminis. Full of possibilities. Seminality.

N Y didn't work out. He wanted too much. I couldn't. Wasn't ready. All fucking grateful. Knowing no different. Jumped too quickly. Again. Fifteen minutes of fame. Running. In London I ran. Every where. All the fucking time. She didn't stop it. She didn't stop me from running. She will too. I will be dead. I will die.

Words are problems. Acid spittin. Usually she is disappointed. Firestone and the dialectic. Radical. Man hating. Separatist. Solanas was fucked up too. She was disappointed. Hooks, usually doesn't like it. Patriarchy. The revolution will not be bloody. Your body parts won't make a difference here. You'll have to do as Mary did. Out smart the bastards at their own game. Risk loosing the battle. Risk annihilating yourself. Find other words. Mother was not never sexy. If you're a man. Then you can. (Martin Creed, Hayward) All language is his. Its an uphill battle, too big at times. We take it down word, by fucking word. Firestone and the dialectic. Valarie's Scum. Jo's bitch. Helene is cosmic.

Insurance policy does not cover children. Good Neoliberal Virgin gets off on sending them home. More rules to choke us by. Not quite enough rope to finish the job though. Keeps us in our place. Divide and conquer. No such thing as society. Bitch (Thatcher) meant community. Only the individual. And. The family. She meant nucle-ar-s only. Nice tidy units. Divide and conquer. Look after number one. Fuck everyone else. Fuck yourself if you have to. Replace religion. Jesus. At least that particular patriarchal indoctrination used the word. Love. All bullshit. To the child in me for a while it felt. Hopeful. No love in the Neo-Lib. Only self care there.

Kill the Family. Kill the parent. Kill the capitalist, nu-clear, neoliberal two fucking kids F A M I L Y. Dogs. Mother. Love the Mother. Again. Love the mother. Reclaim her. Own it. What about the father. What about him. He's doing just fine. Where the fuck is she. Massacred while we were sleeping. Love. Everywhere. You might think while you drive your husbands car you're in the driving seat. Love. Like fuck you are. We may no longer scrub on hands and knees but we are still scrubbers.

Why can't we. On the grounds that your child is underage. Well I know that. She's strapped to my fucking chest. See. We cannot admit her. You are not admitting, fool. I am. She is underage. She does not understand language. Yet. Your child does not meet the age restriction. She's a fucking baby. I want this. Let me in. Policy imparted again. Later we manage it. Organised by artists. The only one of us there. Music was too much. She howled. I. We left. Venice was romance. Up your arse England.

This is exhausting. Like a bad boyfriend who fucks and eats. Half-dead unresponsive lump.⁵⁰ His claim on love tenuous. Hanging on like a desperate cow. No hot fucking, here. Tricky this is about to become, love. In the end there was nothing. No more fight left. Can't take em all on. Its everywhere. Too fucking much. Where is utopia.

One of Ten Memorable kisses in Art, Picasso and some unknown, unlucky woman. The patriarch. Powerful men in the art world. He leans. She under him. Waiting. He's hot and strong. In control. Successful. Love him. Hairy chest. Big Cock. Mills and fucking Boon.

You can't buy a one bed flat. The housing association has a responsibility to you and your family. Why. You have a dependent. I fucking know. I also only have one income. You give two beds to the nu-clear-s. The housing association has a responsibility to house the greatest number of people. Can't invent a boyfriend. Down to one association. You now qualify for two beds. Keep it, just let me have this one,

⁵⁰ Half dead unresponsive lump, is taken from SCUM Manifesto.

one bed, now. At the mercy of friends still. Tensions. This is hell for everyone. I brought despair and desperation. They brought misery. This is not working. I feel like a fucking kid. I'm making art but don't know it. Ten years later I'm still making it. Shared parenting is not working. I mother. You can parent all you fucking want to. The commune. Fuck have to think about a school soon. Will have to make do. No choices left.

Seminal, what a word. Baldessari. White. Male. He made, Wrong. I'm making seminal. I'm a fucking seminit. Am I doing a Mary here. Or a John. I fucking hope so. These bills are not going to pay themselves.

She is not dead. She is not living. Apologises for what. They think she is grateful. They think she always enjoys it. It. They think she was made for. It. What else is she for. Played out daily. She needs them to love. Too big to take on. This paradigm shift. Her power for fuck's sake.

She alone.

Asshole.

Conclusion

In asking ‘how art on and of maternity might transcend its own audience?’, I set out to make work derived from personal experience, that being maternity, that might operate in spaces not solely dedicated to the subject. Drawing heavily from second wave feminist activism where the personal was declared political, I was looking at the political as personal. Seeking paradigmatic shifts in thinking and living were played out in practice and writing. Streams of consciousness where I could tell the world to fuck itself, form much of the writing of the Ph.D.

Initially I looked for the mother in the spaces of contemporary art. Through previous work on *Enemies of Good Art* I realised that the mother was missing from art spaces, in physical terms accessibility for women with children. Through this period of research, I found the mother to be missing from the spaces I thought she would most likely feature, that being feminist thought, group exhibitions, journals and discursive scholarly events. That the mother sits in her own context, of group exhibitions, publications and discursive events dedicated to the mother, could be the subject of further research. The purpose of this Ph.D. was to propose a new way of looking at maternity, one that was overtly concerned with bodily experiences. In works such as *She will never be a ballet dancer* (chapter 5) the body has suffered a deformity brought on by pregnancy. Vocal chords can distort due to pressures on the body from the growing foetus. In the work the artist sings an entire pop album in front of a live audience. Her vocal chords never recovered. While the body is the site for concern in this work it is played out by an uncomfortable confrontation with her disability. Confrontation, anger and irreverence became the cornerstones of my Ph.D. Through my research I have asked questions of feminism in an attempt to understand why the mother is missing from a number of key feminist and intellectual contexts. Opportunities for artists who are also mothers to pursue maternally-centric practices continue to run the risk of ghettoisation. The subject of the family continues to be a private affair, where decisions on the affordability of childcare is prohibitive to many

artists. Concerns for one's reputation as a 'serious' artist come into question: should one decide to have her time divided between her family and the studio? Must an artist be as established as Laure Provost to risk having a baby? Provost brought her infant on stage when accepting her Turner prize in 2003. Or Susan Hiller, when she was advised against making and showing *Ten Months 1977-79*, declared that she had enough work behind her to weather any backlash.

As an artist I wanted to make works that counterbalanced the research. I set out to prove that works on maternity need not only be confined to their own contexts, in spaces and initiatives that look towards maternity. My ambitions were to make works on maternity that aimed to critique the shame and self-censorship that the art world is riven with on this issue. In previous art works I engaged with aesthetic pleasure and audience seduction on works that were derived from desperate social situations such as poverty, homelessness and loneliness. Not reliant solely on visual pleasure for works that comprised the exhibition *Usually she is disappointed*, I also engaged with politics, humour, anger, and aesthetics of second wave feminist art. My practice has shifted from one that engaged with social issues through photography to a much more expanded one incorporating all lens-based media, writing, performance and installation works. Provocations are played out in both the thesis and exhibition of art works. In this case the thesis has become an artwork in its own right. I have deliberately steered away from a conventional academic approach to writing, as practice and theory became ever more entangled as I progressed. Writing became a form of practice, a side of my practice I had not previously explored.

My research found that the negation of the mother is an ongoing problem; currently Maternal studies is not taught in a UK university, it is not possible to undertake a module on the subject. In my previous position as Programme Leader for Fine Art at the University of Bolton, I was in the process of developing a course of study at Master's level. The programme was designed to incorporate all aspects of practice, research and the family. Study at this level would have facilitated a much-needed provision on the subject. Maternal studies in an art context would have provided a

much-needed space for study and art making, developing emerging practices on the subject. It would also legitimise maternity as a credible field of study. I was looking into the possibility of providing crèche facilities through an outside provider. Women would have been made welcome and their children also. Issues around insurance prohibiting parents from taking children continues to be problematic across most universities in the UK. The levels of exclusion for women artists with children is systemic; it has permeated all aspects of our lives. The individuation of our lives brought on by Neoliberalism has made us feel like failures, where access to affordable childcare not only becomes prohibitive, it is also embarrassing.

In April 2021 I hosted an online conference *The Missing Mother*. More than 300 delegates registered for the event, with 30 papers presented over two days; on average 100 delegates were in attendance across both days. Women gathered from all over the world, working around childcare needs, joining online from offices, studios and kitchen tables. Over the course of two days there was a sense of hope that this might evolve into something greater, but also a sadness that here we were again, talking to each other while the rest of the art world continued to ignore us. Coming out of the conference, I am currently working with Demeter Press on an anthology of art and writing. The second *Missing Mother* conference is in the planning stages. At the end of the Ph.D., as I prepare to submit this work for the final time, I am preparing to return to Ireland, where I have not lived for nearly three decades. I will continue to work on *The Missing Mother*.

Index – Enemies of Good Art

This period of research including thesis, *The Missing Mother* and exhibition *Usually she is disappointed* comes out of my work on *Enemies of Good Art*. *Enemies of Good Art* was a series of discursive events I initiated with the broadcast journalist Anna Shorter, six months after giving birth. Initially I envisioned *Enemies of Good Art* as a collective or art group that would work on the issues surrounding our concerns as mothers and artists. Anna and I asked artists Cat Picton-Phillips and Jemima Brown, and dancer Lizzie Le Quesne to form this group. The group was mostly active from 2009 to 2012. We invited women artists who had children to publicly funded gallery spaces in central London, so that we might critique the institution that effectively excluded us. Men were also invited but they seldom joined us; children were openly welcome but not the focus of the events, to talk about the nature of art practice after the family. Events included 14 public meetings in spaces such as The Whitechapel Gallery, Tate Modern, Chisenhale Gallery, Southbank Centre and The Royal College of Art. We hosted 10 artists talks in collaboration with Troika Editions in Farringdon.⁵¹ We performed one action in the form of a pop-up crèche at Tate Modern and broadcast more than 45 live radio broadcasts on Resonance 104.4FM. All events openly advertised that children were welcome, and encouraged mothers to attend with their children should they choose to or if childcare was an issue. This was the first project of its kind in central London.

For a period of 18 months *Enemies of Good Art* broadcast on Resonance 104.4FM. Live broadcasts were produced on an ad hoc basis: some guests were planned in advance, at other times I recruited willing participants depending on availability.

⁵¹ Troika Editions was an independent photography agency and gallery space in London. They invited *Enemies of Good Art* to host a series of lunchtime talks. With capacity of 20 people seated, we charged £5 per adult. The money raised was used to pay the guest artist speaking. Children were welcome and were mostly of preschool age. At full capacity we had 20 women seated and 8 children. We view this series of talks to have been successful; we could intellectually engage with our children in company.

Guest presenters also featured from time to time. Each broadcast was themed around a pertinent topic of conversation, all relating to maternal experience, from practical concerns of when to have a baby to academic discussions on emotional capital, sociology, psychoanalysis and creativity. I saw each broadcast as a performance, unrehearsed and not researched where nearly all were live. At the time we thought that we were making space for the mother, by breaking myths around art practice for the privileged few, those who could afford studios and the time to use them. Children were welcome at all *Enemies of Good Art* events including our live radio broadcasts. For an archive of talks see <www.enemiesofgoodart.org>

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