

**MOTHERS, MOTHERING, AND MOTHERHOOD IN  
LITERATURE (Fiction, Poetry, Drama, Life Writing, Creative  
Non-Fiction, Social Media)**

**October 22-24, 2014  
Heaslip House, Ryerson University  
(297 Victoria Street, Toronto)**



 Faculty of Arts

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provided by the Office of the Dean of Arts, and the  
Department of English, Ryerson University.**

**Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement (MIRCI)  
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## **Acknowledgements**

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### **AS ALWAYS, THANK YOU TO OUR 2014 Sustaining MIRCI Members**

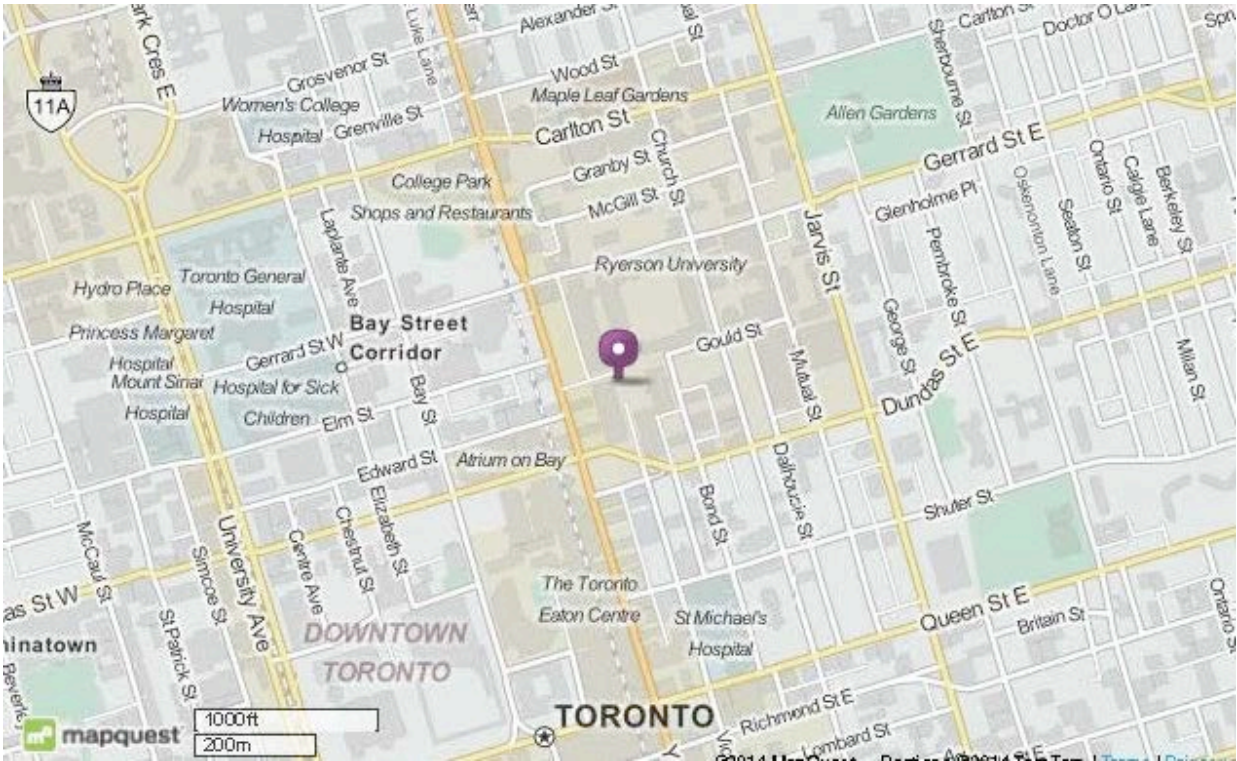
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Enjoy,  
Andrea O'Reilly,  
Director, MIRCI  
Conference Co-Coordinator

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# Directions and Map

**Heaslip House, Ryerson University  
(297 Victoria Street, Toronto)**



## Conference Schedule Overview

### **Wednesday, October 22, 2014**

8:30 am - 9:00 am	Registration: Continental Breakfast
9:00 am – 10:30 am	Session A
10:45 am – 12:15 pm	Session B
12:15 pm – 1:30 pm	Lunch: On Your Own
1:30 pm – 3:00 pm	Session C
3:15 pm – 4:45 pm	Session D
5:00 pm – 6:30 pm	Session E

### **Thursday, October 23, 2014**

8:30 am - 9:00 am	Registration: Continental Breakfast
9:00 am – 10:30 am	Session F
10:45 am – 12:15 pm	Session G
12:15 pm – 1:30 pm	Lunch: On Your Own
1:30 pm – 3:00 pm	Session H
3:15 pm – 5:15 pm	Writing Motherhood Demeter Keynote Panel
5:30 pm – 6:00 pm	Keynote Address
6:00 pm – 8:00 pm	Reception & Book Launch

### **Friday, October 24, 2014**

8:30 am - 9:00 am	Registration: Continental Breakfast
9:00 am – 10:30 am	Session I
10:45 am – 12:15 pm	Session J
12:15 pm – 1:30 pm	Lunch: On Your Own
1:30 pm – 3:00 pm	Session K
3:15 pm – 4:45 pm	Session L

# **Mothers, Mothering and Motherhood in Literature**

(Fiction, Poetry, Drama, Life Writing,  
Creative Non-Fiction, Social Media)

October 22-24, 2014

Heaslip House, Ryerson University  
(297 Victoria Street, Toronto)

## **WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22 2014**

**8:30am-9:00am**

**REGISTRATION: CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST**

**9:00am-10:30am**

**SESSION A: MOTHERS/MOTHERING/MOTHERHOOD IN LITERATURE**

**CHAIR** – Deborah Byrd, Lafayette College

- Kate Williams, University of Tulsa, “Isolated Mothers in the Fiction and Memoirs of Joan Didion”
- Rose A. Sackeyfio, Winston Salem State University, “Motherhood in African Women’s Literature”
- Erin Bell, Wayne State University, ““Co-workers in the mother trade:” Grace Paley’s Short Fiction and the Single Mother”

**10:45am-12:15pm**

**SESSION B: LIFE WRITING AND MATERNAL PRESENCE/ABSENCE**

**CHAIR** – Andrea O’Reilly, York University

- Freema Elbaz-Luwisch, University of Haifa, “Writing About Mother as Personal and Pedagogical Project”
- Natalie Morning, Ryerson and York University, “Words of Consequence: Motherless Daughters, Feminism and the Cultural Texts of the ‘New Momism’”
- Sarah Sahagian, York University, “No, I Don’t Have a Baby: Being Child-free in the Motherhood Studies Community”
- Karen Gold (\*Presenter), Women’s College Hospital, and Christine Stewart-Nunez, South Dakota State University, “Disordered: Creating Nuanced Narratives of Mothering Children With Disabilities Through Creative Non-Fiction”

**12:15pm-1:30pm**

**LUNCH: ON YOUR OWN**

**1:30pm-3:00pm**

**SESSION C: THE BODY/NATURE**

**CHAIR** – Erin Bell, Wayne State University

- Anissa Wardi, Chatham University, “Mother Bodies, Marigolds and Dirt: Transcorporeality in Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*”

- Barbara Mattar, Australian Catholic University, “Birth Under Duress: Representations of Childbirth in Late 20th Fiction”

**3:15pm-4:45pm**

**SESSION D: THE MOTHER FIGURE, ALISON BECHDEL AND GRAPHIC NARRATIVES**

**CHAIR** – Mary Thompson, James Madison University

- Abigail Palko, University of Notre Dame, “Are You Speaking For Me? The Maternal Figure in *Are You My Mother?*”
- Judith Lakämper, Wayne State University, “Surviving Destruction: The Cathetic Mother-Daughter Relationship in Alison Bechdel’s *Are You My Mother?*”
- Natalja Chestopalova, York University and Ryerson University, “From Jane Austen to Alison Bechdel: Affective Economies and Representation of ‘Peripheral’ Voices and ‘Meddling’ Mothers”
- Lorinda Peterson, Queen’s University, “Rendering Visible: Lesbian Mothering, Trauma, and Sequential Art”
- Walter Lai, Ryerson University, “‘Nobody Heard Her Tears’: Graphic Memoir as Intersubjective Space between Mother & Child”

**5:00pm-6:30pm**

**SESSION E: CREATIVE VOICES/STORYTELLING**

**CHAIR** – Maythee Rojas, California State University-Long Beach

- Melinda Vandenberg, University of Toronto, “The Perfect Mother”
- Tiffany Chenneville, University of South Florida, “The Humility of Motherhood”
- Linn Baran, Writer, Editor, Researcher and Community Educator, “His Hand in My Palm: A Feminist Mother's Experience of "Boyhood"”
- Nargis Ara, Government Girls Post Graduate College, “Grand Motherhood to Feel the Deep Emotions of Daughter and Voice of Granddaughter (Come Father Come)!”
- Debbie Byrd, Lafayette College, “Scripting Stories of Resistance: Young Mothers and Theatre of the Oppressed Activism”

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2014**

**8:30am-9:00am**

**REGISTRATION: CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST**

**9:00am-10:30am**

**SESSION F: MOTHERS/MOTHERING/MOTHERHOOD IN LITERATURE**

**CHAIR** – Bethany Jacobs, University of Oregon

- Maythee Rojas, California State University-Long Beach, ““Only in Complete Solitude Did She Feel Like A Woman.” Fractured Images of Domestic Life in Helena Maria Viramontes’s Short Fiction”
- Berit Åström, Umeå University, Sweden, “Unforgiven: The Representation of Motherhood in *The Hunger Games*”

- Ebony Olivia Lumumba, Tougaloo College, “Mothering Interrupted: Representations of Motherhood and South African Apartheid as Repressive Social Paradigms in Nadine Gordimer’s *July’s People* and *The House Gun*”
- Janel Atlas, University of Delaware, “Sui Sin Far’s Mothers: Infanticide and Loss in Chinatown”
- Robin Silbergleid, Michigan State University, “Queer Mothers, Heterosexual Narratives: Pregnancy and Plot in Contemporary Women’s Memoirs”

**10:45am-12:15pm**

**SESSION G: MOTHERS/MOTHERING/MOTHERHOOD  
IN RELIGIOUS & SPIRITUAL LITERATURE**

**CHAIR** – Diana Gustafson, Memorial University

- Brooke Nelson, Claremont Graduate University, “Breastfeeding Virgins and Other Maternal Ironies in the Martyrdom of St. Agatha”
- Mandi Veenstra, Queen’s University, “The “Good” Christian Mother: Manufacturing an Unattainable Ideal”
- Vanessa Reimer, York University, “Whose Memories? A Critical Reflection on Life Writing and the Mother-Daughter Relationship”
- Florence Pasche Guignard, University of Toronto, “Helplessness as Victory. Maternal Dharma in Representations of Mothers, Motherhood and Mothering in Modern Hindi Literature”
- Roxana Cazan, St. Francis University, “Exclusionary Citizenship, Epistemic Violence, and Reproductive Constraints: Being Roma in the Contemporary Czech Republic”

**12:15pm-1:30pm**

**LUNCH: ON YOUR OWN**

**1:30pm-3:00pm**

**SESSION H: LOVE, LABOUR & LOSS: MATERNAL  
DESIRE & REPRODUCTION**

**CHAIR** – Betty Baba, University of Ottawa

- Modhumita Roy, Tufts University, “A Womb of Their Own: Popular Culture and the Normalising of Commercial Surrogacy”
- Mary Thompson, James Madison University, “Thinking Back Through Our Mothers: Contemporary Memoir and Abortion”
- Kate Greenway, York University, “The Absent Mother: Alternative Visions of the Adoption Story”
- Kathy Mantas, Nipissing University, “ART-i-facts (Phase V): An Artful Inquiry On/Into/Through the Experience of Becoming a Mother by Way of ART (Assisted Reproductive Technologies)”
- Zarena Aslami, Michigan State University, “Motherhood as “Exit Strategy”: Professional Working Mothers in the Media and the Problem of Choice”

**3:15pm-5:15pm**

**WRITING MOTHERHOOD DEMETER KEYNOTE  
PANEL**



**CHAIR** – Andrea O’Reilly, York University

- Laurie Kruk, Author of *My Mother Did Not Tell Stories* (2012)
- Rachel Epp Buller, Author of *Have Milk, Will Travel: Adventures in Breastfeeding* (2013)
- Robin Silbergleid, Author of *Texas Girl* (2014)
- Lissa Cowan, Author of *Milk Fever* (2013)
- Linda Rosenbaum, Author of *Not Exactly As Planned: A Memoir of Adoption, Secrets and Abiding Love* (2014)
- Tricia McCallum, Author of *The Music of Leaving*

**5:30pm-6:00pm**                      **KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

**CHAIR** – Elizabeth Podnieks, Ryerson University

- Jowita Bydlowska, author of the bestselling memoir *Drunk Mom* (Doubleday 2013)

**6:00pm-8:00pm**                      **RECEPTION & BOOK LAUNCH**

**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2014**

**8:30am-9:00am**                      **REGISTRATION: CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST**

**9:00am-10:30am**                      **SESSION I: DIS/ABILITY**

**CHAIR** – Zarena Aslami, Michigan State University

- Betty Baba, University of Ottawa, “Disability: Measuring the identity and social challenge of a mother”
- Kathleen Venema, University of Winnipeg, “Mothering as Containment Strategy in Lori Lansens’ *The Girls*”
- Melanie Stone, Western University, ““Where did she get that baby?” The Erasure of Dis/abled Mothers in Social Media and Mommy Blogs”
- Jane Tolmie, Queen’s University, “Emily Rapp’s *Little Seal*: Regarding the Pain of Others”

**10:45am-12:15pm**                      **SESSION J: MOTHERS/MOTHERING/MOTHERHOOD IN LITERATURE**

**CHAIR** – Betty Baba, University of Ottawa

- Bethany Jacobs, University of Oregon, “Ride me to the Crossroads: Becoming the Erotic Mother in Audre Lorde’s *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*”
- Rita Bode, Trent University, “Complicating Motherhood in Edith Wharton’s Fiction”
- Katie Piper Greulich, Michigan State University, “An Ambient—and Ambivalent—Poetics: The Ecomimesis of Writing Motherhood”
- Betty Baba, University of Ottawa, “Motherhood: The Black Mother in American Mother –Daughter in Toni Morrison’s *Literal Work*”

**12:15pm-1:30pm**                      **LUNCH: ON YOUR OWN**

**1:30pm-3:00pm**

**SESSION K: THE BODY, MEDIA, & POLITICS/SOCIETY**

**CHAIR** – Linn Baran, Writer, Editor, Researcher and Community Educator

- Diana Gustafson, Memorial University, “Maternal Bodies in Medical Textbooks and Classrooms”
- Davod Ahmadi Gheidari, “Mothers’ Food choices: An analysis of differences between Francophones and Anglophones in Canada”
- Penelope Morris, “Problems and Prescriptions: Ideas of Motherhood in 1950s and 1960s Italian Print Media”
- Mariam Irene Tazi-Preve, University of Vienna, “Motherhood in Patriarchy. Abolishing the Matrilineal Order”

**3:15pm-4:45pm**

**SESSION L: SOCIETY/POLITICS/COMMUNITIES**

**CHAIR** – Diana Gustafson, Memorial University

- Linda Hunter, University of Guelph, “Maternal Politics and Representations of Motherhood During the French Enlightenment: Relevance to Theoretical Developments”
- Laura Saldanha, Concordia University, “Mothering as an Embodied Practice: Contemporary Notions of the "Good" Mother Within a Neoliberal Framework”
- Valerie Heffernan, National University of Ireland Maynooth, “Contemporary Women’s Writing in German: The Feminist Family Romance”
- May Friedman, Ryerson University, “Trans/parent: The Politics of Transition”



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41. **Noble Orphan** (Nicki) \$14.95 **\$9**
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# Keynote Book Summaries & Abstracts

(Alphabetical by Last Name)

## **Drunk Mom**

Jowita Bydlowska

I will discuss how my gender and my parental role shaped the way my memoir, *Drunk Mom*, has been perceived by audiences: outrage, surprise but also praise for daring to write about being a “bad” mother. I will contrast this with two addiction memoirs written by men who were also fathers (Christopher Shulgan, David Carr). I will talk, in general, what motherhood means to others and what it means to me. I will talk about mommy blogs and my own blog where I’ve been writing about my failings as a mother. I will talk about media’s reaction to my memoir. Negative reactions: scolding, outrage and dismissal of women’s confessional writing. Positive reactions: support of writing about what we don’t talk about (motherhood and addiction), the use of the word “brave.” Why is “brave” a word we still use to describe a woman writing about herself. Finally, I will talk about the structure of my memoir and the lack of takeaway lesson – do we expect me to offer wisdom perhaps because I’m a mother?

## **Milk Fever**

Lissa Cowan

In 1789, Armande, a wet nurse who is known for the mystical qualities of her breast milk, goes missing from her mountain village. Céleste, a cunning servant girl who Armande once saved from shame and starvation, sets out to find her. A snuffbox found in the snow, the unexpected arrival of a gentleman and the discovery of the wet nurse’s diary, deepen the mystery. Using Armande’s diary as a map to her secret past, Céleste fights to save her from those plotting to steal the wisdom of her milk. *Milk Fever* explores the fight for women’s rights and the rise in clandestine literature laying bare sexuality, the nature of love and the terrible consequences for women as a result of the gender binary.

## **Have Milk, Will Travel**

Rachel Epp Buller

This short presentation for the keynote panel will intersperse readings from my book, *Have Milk, Will Travel: Adventures in Breastfeeding*, with my experiences listening to mothers share their stories as I have traveled around the U.S. and Canada for book events. Sharing stories in this vein, I argue, allows women to connect and feel empowered across a diversity of experiences, combating what the media often sets up as the “mommy wars.”

## **My Mother Did Not Tell Stories**

Laurie Kruk

*My Mother Did Not Tell Stories* challenges simplistic or sentimental maternal, familial and cultural narratives by offering contemporary perspectives on women caught between generations, between self and other, and between independence and relatedness. Encountering new environments and extended family and community ties, the women in these poems are

inspired to make larger links between human, animals, cultural, geographical, political and spiritual realities.

Whether the poems discuss the burdens handed to us by history, nature, or our sometimes disagreeable families, Kruk's speakers learn the significance of 'making use of these windfalls, neglected / lessons, unharvested plenty' ("Translating the Bush"). By filling in the gaps of storytelling that never occurred in her family, Kruk's poems offer a striking reminder that stories attempt to express even that which is inexpressible.

### **The Music of Leaving**

Tricia McCallum

There is a music of leaving, as surely as there is that of arriving.

And it is this distinct soulful music that often plays in the background of our lives, says poet Tricia McCallum.

Welcome to *The Music of Leaving*, McCallum's new book of poetry being launched today by Demeter Press.

McCallum says she plans to share with her audience poems on quite a diverse number of subjects, and her book has many from which she can choose.

What are McCallum's poems about?

They are about elephants being traipsed through the Queen's midtown tunnel, an unstable child's slide, and roaming island dogs. About the visit to a family home before it is sold and a late-night conversation in a plane above an ocean. About Irish falcons and eloquent gravestones, da Vinci's unfinished joke book, a young girl's sleepover, the elegant legs of a heron, and landing on the moon. About a vintage blouse, jackknife dives at dusk, and the memory-conduit of lavender.

And she writes, too, about good love and bad love: "Especially bad love, that common, heartbreaking thing.

"I don't think my poems are simple necessarily," she explains, "but they are about commonplace things. The abstract never drew me. It's the day-to-day world and all its presumably mundane detail that provides me with more than I need."

McCallum's hope for *The Music of Leaving* is that it delivers to her readers those "magical moments of understanding" that a good poem can.

Come and listen to McCallum's *Music of Leaving*.



## **Not Exactly As Planned: A Memoir of Adoption, Secrets and Abiding Love**

Linda Rosenbaum

*Not Exactly As Planned* chronicles Linda Rosenbaum's arrival to Toronto in 1970 from the US after political upheaval and sexual violence in Washington, D.C. casts her on an unexpected journey north in search of safe haven. A move to Toronto Island, marriage, and parenthood through two unorthodox adoption processes finally bring a sense of safety and belonging.

Life takes a major turn when Linda's son, adopted-at-birth, is diagnosed at the age of six with fetal alcohol syndrome. According to statistics at the time, fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) was a sentence for failure. Her son would drop out of school, be incapable of holding a job, live on the street or worse. The brain damage, they said, was irreversible.

Rosenbaum is determined to change Michael's prognosis and live with as much joy as possible while trying to beat Michael's odds. But in the course of her struggle, she realizes a hard truth. We can't fix all that is broken. She must learn to accept her new reality, and her son, in order to find peace.

*Not Exactly as Planned* is more than a story of motherlove: it's about bird watching, bar mitzvahs, saving the Toronto Island, the collision of '60s ideals with the real world, family secrets and woodcarving.

With compassion and humour, Rosenbaum weaves these disparate threads of her life into a story of acceptance, at once achingly unique yet universal to all parents. *Not Exactly As Planned* is a provocative story about hope, loss and acceptance.

## **Texas Girl**

Robin Silbergleid

At twenty-seven years old, Robin Silbergleid decided to become a single mother. Not as a backup or Plan B, but as first choice. In her memoir *Texas Girl*, she raises fundamental questions about the nature of family and maternity at the turn of the twenty-first century. At a moment when SMCs grace the covers of magazines and Hollywood films, *Texas Girl* adds the perspective of someone who boldly side-steps the social expectation for a woman to take a life-partner before she has a child. But she soon finds out the desire to have a baby comes much easier than actually getting pregnant. Beginning with a metaphorical conception, *Texas Girl* charts a long four-year journey, including infertility, miscarriage, and high-risk pregnancy, traveling from Indiana to Texas and back to the snowy north. In this compelling coming-of-age narrative, Silbergleid explores the notion of the chosen family, as close female friends provide perspective, support, and comic relief along the way. A must-read for anyone contemplating single motherhood, this biting honest memoir will resonate with anyone concerned with the vital feminist issue of what reproductive choice really means and the obstacles we face in pursuit of it.

# Presenters' Abstracts

(Alphabetical by Last Name)

## **Grand Motherhood to Feel the Deep Emotions of Daughter and Voice of Granddaughter (Come Father Come)!**

Nargis Ara

My daughter is only twenty-two years old. She was too intelligent, and before conceiving her daughter, she was a first year student at medical college. She was in white overalls with her friends at the college of medicine. But suddenly she got a visa to travel to the UK to see her husband, and she got a positive reading of her pregnancy test, and after six emotional months she appeared in the final exam of her medical college. My daughter delivered a baby girl. She was very eager for her visa to visit her husband in the UK. I was struggling for my daughter's education as a private student. On the 12th of February 2014, she successfully got her Bachelors Degree in English. Another single mother who migrated from Pakistan to Cambridge, Ontario, approximately 25 year before, and working in the towel industry to foster and nourish her daughter. She spent her life as a single mother because her husband got another marriage. A comparative analysis of education, work and emotions of a mother through the passage of time like a burning candle in the wind.

## **Motherhood as "Exit Strategy": Professional Working Mothers in the Media and the Problem of Choice**

Zarena Aslami

In this paper, I discuss Lisa Belkin's "The Opt-Out Revolution" (2003) published in the *New York Times Magazine*, Anne-Marie Slaughter's "Why Women Still Can't Have It All" (2012), published in *The Atlantic*, and, the follow-up to Belkin's article, Judith Warner's "The Opt-Out Generation Wants Back In" (2013), which also appeared in the *New York Times Magazine*. These articles galvanize recent U.S. discourse surrounding a small, but powerful, minority of women: educated, professional, married, working mothers. These women were likely exposed to academic and political feminism in their undergraduate years, but in their later professional and family lives, struggle to explain their everyday experiences, their intimate relationships, and what they consistently cast as their "choices." Drawing upon Angela McRobbie's recent work on "mediated maternity" and the neoliberal cooptation of feminism, I argue that these cultural commentaries both expose the contradictions facing working mothers and contribute to them. In particular, by emphasizing "choice," these articles obscure how privileged women who quit powerful jobs and cast their decision to leave as choice, do so to maintain their sense of self. In other words, if we read these articles against themselves, we can grasp that the women who "opted out" felt like they had no choice other than to think of themselves as taking an option. To admit otherwise would be unthinkable. While arguing for a complication of the status of choice, I do not wish to downplay the ways that more options are available to these women than to their less-supported counterparts. However, I do wish to argue that this construction of "choice" drives the critical rhetoric targeted at mothers across society. In my paper, I will move to a consideration of how "choice" operates in these cultural texts: instead of liberating women who work and mother, "choice" deflects attention from collective courses of action that could support parents across the socio-economic spectrum.

## **Unforgiven: The Representation of Motherhood in *The Hunger Games***

Berit Åström

This paper investigates the representation of mothers and mothering in Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* trilogy. Rather than simply reading Katniss Everdeen's critical attitude towards her mother as a reflection of the trope of fraught mother/daughter relationships recurring in young adult literature (Crew, *Is it really Mommie Dearest?*, 2000), a trope supposedly employed to assist teenage girls in their search for emotional independence (Nadeau, "The Mother/Daughter Relationship in Young Adult Fiction," 1995), this paper contrasts the representation of mothers and mother figures to the representation of fathers and father figures, arguing that the novels privilege the latter over the former. The narratives present both mother and father figures as weak, ineffectual, absent, and in some cases, abusive, failing to live up to the cultural expectations placed on parents as selfless and self-sacrificing, altruistic and nurturing. However, father figures are presented in a more forgiving light, and are given the opportunity to redeem themselves, whereas failing mothers remain a target of blame throughout the novels, and are not redeemed. The novels thus give a nuanced image of parenting, presenting parental characters as fully rounded characters rather than stereotypes, yet perpetuate the cultural prejudices that reward fathers and father figures for at least trying, whereas mothers are criticised for not succeeding completely.

## **Sui Sin Far's Mothers: Infanticide and Loss in Chinatown**

Janel Atlas

In *Sui Sin Far's Mothers: Infanticide and Loss in Chinatown*, I explore how Asian Canadian-American writer Sui Sin Far (1865-1914) appropriates the popular 19th century trope of the dying child to confront America's anti-Chinese immigration policies. Recent work by childhood studies critics including Karen Sanchez-Eppler and Robin Bernstein has established that power adheres to the figure of the dying child. However, while much of the scholarship acknowledges that the idealized child is usually white (Stowe's Little Eva is the paragon), critics have paid little attention to representations of non-white immigrant infant mortality and the literary and social implications of maternal grief.

My paper analyzes "The Wisdom of the New," a tale of a Chinese mother who kills her son rather than accept his Americanization, and "Prize China Baby," which ends with the accidental death of a mother and her infant daughter upon leaving a beautiful baby contest. Like enslaved mothers, the women in Far's stories must decide how to live out their principles; for some, that means murdering their own babies to save them from oppression in a country whose statutes attempt to reject their entry and actively seek their demise.

Sui Sin Far blends sentimentalist conventions with realist portrayals to reassert conservative domesticity, putting fictional Chinese mothers and their babies into situations that show the violent consequences of anti-Chinese legislation and rampant sinophobia of late 19th and early 20th century America. My paper offers exciting and generative readings of Far's representations of maternity and infant death as forms of political critique.

## **Disability: Measuring the identity and social challenge of a mother**

Betty Baba

The way society views an individual who suffers from disability can have impact in their life. It appears as if a significant concern of women with disabilities is the difficulty of being considered an attractive and sexual being. "Women who do not conform to the prescribed norm of social desirability are viewed as having experiences and attributes somewhat different from that of other women in this culture and as a result are often isolated" (Heather Kuttai).

To avoid been judged harshly in the society by family members and society at large, this paper will explore the societal images and challenges for women with disabilities within the general presumptions for women's sexuality. We will examine the connections between dis/ability that wade through a consideration of societal expectations, silence or acknowledgement of difference, presumptions of sexuality, and self love/hate. We will analyze the barriers facing women with disabilities; the perception of otherness, and the idea that disability is viewed as deficit.

## **Motherhood: The black mother and American mother –daughter in Toni Morrison's literal work**

Betty Baba

The paper explores a literary work on "Sula", who portrays the complexity of mother –daughter relationships in a black community as represented by the characters in Toni Morrison's novels. The approach will be a focus on the secondary characters. The analysis will examine the close relation between mother and daughter from the psychoanalytic, psychological, sociological perspectives. This finding explores the psychoanalyst's analysis on the narcissistic compulsion in mothers who try to make their children resemble them. The results will enhance the sociological theories pertaining to the literal work, which will link to black mothers in America today.

## **His Hand in My Palm: A Feminist Mother's Experience of "Boyhood"**

Linn Baran

In 2001, I birthed a boy. I wrote a poem soon after about my thoughts from that day- how I felt both immensely powerful (did a penis just come out of me!?) and powerless (now what?!) at the same time. It had always been very clear to me as a feminist (and established goddess mother to several girls) how I wanted to be a mother and I felt quite capable of "drawing down a daughter" (Claire Harris, 1982). I was however neither prepared nor excited about the challenges I would face in this new and unknown process in my life of what I have termed as "(w)riting down a son". My Palm --Palmer-- is now 13 years old. I still jokingly refer to him as my "better half" even though he has far succeeded in height and weight (and substance) an equal distribution of being between myself and his father, my happily unmarried partner of many years. My son is very much his own being with clearly defined lines of where we both begin and end. Nevertheless, my son also remains my "beautiful boy", my "little man" -- a being whom I have mothered according to my feminist principles of non-binary, non-gendered parenting with a big dollop of a social justice framework thrown on top our lives together so

far. Learning from and listening to one another has been very colorful and informative and I look forward to the years to come as we both change even more and as our relationship continuously transforms.

Using the backdrop of Richard Linklater's recent film *Boyhood* (2014) and the ideas of several maternal feminist writers and theorists (including Adrienne Rich and Sara Ruddick), this multi-medium presentation brings together a "maternal thinking" process that may be common to many feminist mothers of sons. More specifically, in my prose, poetry, and photography, I will introduce and outline my own ideas for an empowered mothering that allows for a mutually reciprocal and respectful "outlaw" identity for both feminist mother and son that considers change over time, amongst each other, and across social and political dis/connects.

### **“Co-workers in the mother trade:” Grace Paley’s Short Fiction and the Single Mother** Erin Bell

Most critics of American author Grace Paley comment extensively on her exploration of women’s issues including: maternity, birth, childcare, divorce, and myriad other issues. This project will demonstrate how Paley’s short fiction troubles the myths of the nuclear family and what Betty Friedan terms the “Happy Homemaker Housewife” in mid-century America through the close readings and analysis of three short stories in particular including: “Two Short Sad Stories from a Long and Happy Life,” “The Pale Pink Roast,” and “Faith in a Tree.” In these short works, Paley employs a variety of formal moves which subvert and oppose the aforementioned societal “norms.” This project will demonstrate that Paley’s use of irony, humor, and several experimental literary devices (most often equated with postmodern literature) exposes commonly employed (naturalized) representations of the mother, wife, and woman, and that her use of the genre of short fiction itself arguably challenges phallogocentric modes of writing. By placing the single mother as narrator in a position of power and in control to write her own narrative, Paley exposes the commonly disseminated images of woman as mere simulacra and ultimately demonstrates that biology or sex does not preclude one’s disposition to parenting skills.

### **Complicating Motherhood in Edith Wharton’s Fiction** Rita Bode

For a novelist who is most frequently associated with depictions of New York society in the gilded age, Edith Wharton has received her share of the significant critical attention directed at depictions of the maternal. As Hildegard Hoeller summarizes, much of this attention centres on Wharton’s later fiction. Wharton’s first modern biographer, R. W. B. Lewis, sees in the work that Wharton produced “in the two decades after the Great War . . . a vital new concern . . . almost a new compulsion: what might be called the maternal imagination.” The work on Wharton of a range of other critics acknowledges, however, even if only in passing, that Wharton’s interest in motherhood is evident in her fiction from its beginnings. In the early works, in figures like Lily Bart and Charity Royall, Wharton often imbues motherhood with the possibility for transition and transformation, as when Charity finds in her unborn child her “one sensation . . . of reality . . . like a load that held her down, and yet like a hand that pulled her to her feet.” In locating these moments of transition and transformation, this paper seeks to

elucidate the continuum of Wharton's engagements with motherhood over time. It pays particular attention to patterns of both embracing, and abandoning motherhood, as well as to the various ways in which Wharton complicates access to the maternal.

### **Scripting Stories of Resistance: Young Mothers and Theatre of the Oppressed Activism**

Debbie Byrd

This presentation opens with a brief overview of Theatre of the Oppressed, a form of interactive, activist theatre in which people who belong to a marginalized group share their stories with one another and with allies, critically reflect upon these narratives, then collectively script and enact scenes that dramatize both routine experiences of oppression and various ways in which oppressive behaviours and ideologies can be exposed, critiqued, and resisted. My presentation recounts how two groups of young women—young, low-income single mothers and non-parenting Women's Studies students attending a small private liberal arts college—came together to create, perform, and film *A [Nightmarish] Day in the Life of a Young Single Mom*, a series of skits in which young mothers resist and challenge the negative stereotyping and discrimination they experience on a daily basis.

### **Exclusionary Citizenship, Epistemic Violence, and Reproductive Constraints: Being Roma in the Contemporary Czech Republic**

Roxana Cazan

In October 2001, Helena Ferencikova, a 21 year old Roma (Gypsy) woman and Czech citizen, was coerced into sterilization after delivering her second child at the Vitkovice Blahoslavene Marie Antoniny Hospital in Ostrava, The Czech Republic. Four years later, acknowledging the hospital's malpractice, the Court ruled in Ferencikova's favor and requested that the hospital owes her an apology. The case above is not only the first court case against the coercive sterilization of Romani women in Eastern Europe highly circulated in the press, but also the main act in Michele Coomber's heartfelt documentary, *Trial of a Child Denied* (2011). Taking a stand on issues such as women's rights, racism, and democratic citizenship in Central and Eastern Europe, the film documents the systemic denial of Roma women's rights to bodily integrity and reproductive freedom. Arguably, Coomber's documentary simultaneously constructs Roma individuals as fated victims of a long standing xenophobia amplified under Communism in the Czech Republic on the one hand, and on the other hand as embodiments of a people in formation whose deceptive exclusion from citizenship illustrates the very failure of European unification. In this paper, I argue that as a modern epistemology of what Etienne Balibar calls *the border zone*, the documentary employs the trope of female sterilization to depict the performance of violent state sovereignty and exclusionary citizenship that Roma in Eastern and Central Europe wrestle.

### **The Humility of Motherhood**

Tiffany Chenneville

This short story describes the humbling experience of motherhood, beginning with childbirth. In this personal account, the insecurities, fear, and self-imposed pressure that new mothers often experience is highlighted in a humorous, but sobering way. The existential nature of childbirth

and the impact of motherhood on concepts of self and others is explored in this piece, which describes one woman's journey from pregnancy to birth. Below is an excerpt:

*Had I been stronger, or had I not come to associate natural childbirth in my home as a badge of honor that would guarantee my success as a mother, I would have stayed put. But, no, self-criticism set in and my determination to prove to myself and to my child that I was good enough, capable enough, that my maternal instincts were sound enough, took over and, before I knew it, we had signed out of the hospital against medical advice and my mother was driving us home.*

This story lends itself to discussions about the ways in which we, as mothers, sometimes set unrealistic expectations as we attempt to prove ourselves worthy of our children's unconditional love. It also speaks to the ease with which mothers abolish vanity and welcome the inherent degradation of childbirth in honor of the miraculous experience of motherhood.

### **From Jane Austen to Alison Bechdel: Affective Economies and Representation of 'Peripheral' Voices and 'Meddling' Mothers**

Natalja Chestopalova

The notion of the voice – as an elusive and paradoxical point of intersection, between the physical body and individual expression through sound and language – is a recurrent motif in works of fiction and autobiography. This paper turns to Slavoj Žižek's and Mladen Dolar's discourse on the voice, voicelessness, and silence to interrogate the figure of the mother as a 'peripheral' or 'meddling' parental presence in literature and graphic fiction. Building on Dolar's definition of the voice as the originary signifier, this paper examines some of the ways in which the 'peripheral' or 'meddling' motherly voices contribute to the formation of affective economies in parent-child bonds. The figure of the 'meddling' mother is in many ways synonymous with the character of Mrs. Bennett from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Austen's 'peripheral' heroine uses the voice to mediate and/or maintain her role as an affective motherly presence. This paper expands this mediation of parental affective economy by engaging Alison Bechdel's autobiographic novel *Are You My Mother?: A Comic Drama* (2012). Bechdel's work relies on psychology and psychoanalysis to navigate a traumatic relationship with her parents and partners. Situating the reader in the "position of the analyst" (TPR), the figure of the mother is narrated as a constructed shifting entity that mutates and molds itself onto transitional objects and substitute experiences. Against this multiplicity of motherly figures, this paper focuses on Bechdel's conversations with her mother mediated by technology, as a way of distinguishing the role of voice and voicelessness in their affective bond.

### **Writing About Mother as Personal and Pedagogical Project**

Freema Elbaz-Luwisch

In this presentation I reflect on "writing about mother" drawing on two sources: my own experience of writing the story of my mother's life (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2013), and stories of mothers written by prospective teachers at the University of Haifa. In a course on multiculturalism in education, student teachers engaged in personal writing, and many wrote

about their mothers. This writing highlights how members of different groups - Arab and Jew, Israeli and Palestinian - story their experience of mothering and their view of mother.

Teachers' stories show that they take up a "position of presence" in front of students (Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003). Characterizing these stories, with Ricouer (1998), as "stories which demand to be told", I ask how stories of mother live on in memory, in gesture, posture and movement, and in how they shape one's practice as a teacher and as an academic in the classroom. In the tradition of narrative inquiry from a personal/practical knowledge perspective (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), teaching is both lived experience and narrative; the subject of education carries a particular history, comes to school with her body and stands in a place. As a daughter of Jewish immigrants to Canada now living in Israel, I inherited a difficult history which shapes my life and work, and which I seek to unfold through exploring stories of mothers (see Steedman, 1986). In the paper I will explore themes that characterize stories of mothers from different backgrounds, aspects of style and narrative voice, and the role of fictionalizing in auto/biographical inquiry.

### **Trans/parent: The Politics of Transition**

May Friedman

Parents are meant to be selflessly committed to the needs of their children over their own. This selflessness may be threatened when parents who are gender diverse make the choice to transition genders. Such parents are often viewed as selfish or self-indulgent for prioritizing their commitment to strong self-identity over the perceived needs of their children, reifying both the ideal of the selfless parent as martyr and the sanctity of gendered parenting roles. This presentation will explore the memoirs of three male to female parents who explore issues of transition and parenting. Kate Bornstein discusses the estrangement which followed her gender transition (among many other issues) in her memoir *A Queer and Pleasant Danger*. Joy Ladin exposes the difficulties of maintaining relationships with children in *Through the Door of Life*. Finally, Jennifer Boylan explores both the mundanities and exceptionalities of family life with a father who is now a woman in *Stuck in the Middle with You*. A consideration of these texts will allow for an understanding of all that genderqueer and trans parenting can offer to both a revolutionary view of parenthood and a rearticulation of the roles of mothers, fathers and parents.

### **Mothers' Food choices: An analysis of differences between Francophones and Anglophones in Canada**

Davod Ahmadi Gheidari

Using data from the 2012 "Canadian Community Health Survey", the main objective of this article is to investigate "the French Paradox" and main differences in the food choices made by Anglophone versus Francophone mothers who have children less than 5 years of age living in their household. In fact, mothers' food choices are influenced by many variables such as life satisfaction, life and work stress, sense of belonging to community, times of individual and collective physical activities, physical health status (including body mass index), socio-economic status, employment and marital status. These socio-psychological variables will be used to explain food choices made by Anglophone versus Francophone mothers in Canada.



Several studies have shown that mothers' knowledge, skills about foods and food preparation play a notable contribution in the way children eat and drink. Concretely, mothers prevent children from eating unhealthy foods (Slater et al, 2012; Skafida, 2013). So, understanding factors that determine mothers' food choices can be useful in promoting healthy food choices that can lead to healthier families, in one hand, and healthy societies, on the other hand (Beydoun & Wang, 2009; Ristovski-Slijepcevic et al, 2010; Hupkens et al, 1998; Bava et al, 2008; Kirk & Gillespie, 1990; Drotar, 1997; Contento et al, 1993).

So, although the role of healthy food choices in promoting society cohesion is taken for granted (Berkman et al, 2000), but paying more attention to the socio-psychological impacts on mothers 'food choices can contribute to healthier citizens and healthier level of functioning at the societal level.

In this article, we will first conduct descriptive analysis of the population characteristics. Then, we will focus on the association between independents and dependent variable. Linear regression is a multi-level statistics that we will examine within this article to show how dependent variable is determined by independent variables.

### **Disordered: creating nuanced narratives of mothering children with disabilities through creative non-fiction**

Karen Gold (\*Presenter) and Christine Stewart-Nunez

In narratives of illness and disability, a reader often looks for closure and coherence: it is easily apprehended, and fits into a schema of 'sick-and-now-well' or 'disabled-but-now-integrated'. Arthur Frank calls these 'restitution narratives' and they are typically favoured over so called 'chaos narratives' in which people live with unending or chaotic experiences of illness or disability. Perhaps that is because restitution narratives are easily packaged—or finished—and there is nothing to be done either by the reader or the ill person.

Drawing from scholarly work on illness and disability narrative, we seek to enrich our understanding of the experience of mothering children with disabilities through both theory and creative non-fiction. Poet and scholar Christine Stewart-Nunaz's will read from her powerful lyric essay "Disordered". Situated in-between personal narrative and lyric poetry, her essay explores a mother's attempts, through writing, to understand her son's loss of language due to epileptic aphasia.

Through this analysis, we explore the powerful role of creative non-fiction in capturing the complicated, surprising, and often difficult realities of raising differently-abled children. Through layers, fragments and suggestive gaps, lyric essays create evocative literary spaces for feminist reflection and possibilities for nuanced narratives of caregiving. Rather than offering closure or one-dimensional accounts, lyric essays leave the story open, and call readers to participate in the meaning-making process.

## **The Absent Mother: Alternative Visions of the Adoption Story**

Kate Greenway

How do perceptions of adoption, and its attenuate secrecy, serve to reflect, perpetuate or trouble concepts of motherhood? Examining the representation of birthmothers and adoption in various artistic contexts, I witness and testify to the dislocation and marginalization of both birthmother and adopted daughter. Intersections with literature reveal how adoption is conceptualized and internalized, and the many ways in which birthmothers have been or are affected by cultural tensions and dominant ideologies about the definitions of family and importance of heredity. Frequently, adoption has been presented as a ‘problem’ stemming from the ‘family secret’ trope where birthmothers are silenced, shamed and denied agency, even today, despite the open adoption movement, in a society where motherhood confers status and non-motherhood confers stigma. Most interesting are the few representations that challenge such agreed upon norms, where adoption is not always the social salvation it was/is proclaimed as, and dispel the notion of the universality and essentialization of maternal desire.

In addressing these issues, I examine my own adoptive relationships through a combination of long-term qualitative research, autoethnography, artistic practice and creation, and touch on questions of identity, absence, shame, negation, loss, love and familial secrets that are part of the narratives of all human lives.

## **Maternal Bodies in Medical Textbooks and Classrooms**

Diana L. Gustafson

Biomedicine is a powerful force in defining all aspects of reproductive health from conception and contraception to pregnancy, birthing and breastfeeding.

Medical students are routinely exposed to maternal bodies in medical textbooks and clinical settings. As more women are entering medicine than at any other time in history, maternal bodies (actual and potential) are more visible and biologically situated in classrooms. When a female medical student conceives she straddles the boundary between subject and object of the medical gaze trained on the pregnant body.

This paper will present some of visual representations of the maternal body appearing in current textbooks used by first year medical students at one Canadian university. My goal is expose the multiple meanings that these images advance and speculate on how these meanings may be taken up in counter-narratives about motherhood in the medical school curriculum. Doing so has the potential to create more inclusive spaces for maternal bodies in medical schools as well as encouraging more critical conversations about mothers and mothering in and beyond the classroom.

## **Contemporary Women’s Writing in German: The Feminist Family Romance**

Valerie Heffernan

Recent criticism has pointed to the popularity in contemporary German-language literature of the multiperspectival family novel, which uses the family as a prism through which to explore

the residual impact of Second World War on contemporary German society. Women writers often look at this question of family history from the point of view of a particularly female lineage; they explore how the family stories are communicated between and among women across generational lines. In exploring the relationships between female family members, and mothers and daughters in particular, they question the way in which the family narrative is interrupted, distorted, or skewed in the retelling.

This paper will focus its attention on two recent German-language novels that depict families who have experienced the effects of expulsion from the East during and after the Second World War, Larissa Boehning's *Das Glück der Zikaden* [The Song of the Cicadas] (2011) and Jenny Erpenbeck's *Aller Tage Abend* [The End of Days] (2012). The paper will question the extent to which the family stories presented in these novels offer an alternative vision of history that may be linked to a specifically female perspective, centered here on the figure of the mother. In focusing then on the way in which motherhood is engendered and envisioned in these novels, it will also explore how these writers speak to contemporary debates about the family in Germany. Finally, this paper will also investigate the particular narrative strategies employed by women writers to give voice to the maternal perspective, which has all too often been neglected in literary texts.

### **Maternal Politics and Representations of Motherhood During the French Enlightenment: Relevance to Theoretical Developments**

Linda Hunter

This presentation will focus on representations of motherhood in fine art during the French Enlightenment period, as related to the historical events and sociological theories emerging during this time period. Images of the poor and working class, along with those of the upper class will be viewed in connection with the development of philosophical and theoretical perspectives. The theme of the 'happy mother', displaying an emotional connectedness between mother and child, reflects a significant shift in the social view of motherhood that occurred around the Enlightenment period. French genre painting depicted domestic interiors inhabited by women, portraying a respect for women's work in making meals and caring for children. The art portraying mother and child during the Enlightenment period reflects the socio-political issues and social mores of their particular time in history as well as depicts political ideology and social sentiment. The social, emotional and political content of various art works will be discussed in the context of sociological theoretical developments.

### **“Ride me to the Crossroads: Becoming the Erotic Mother in Audre Lorde's *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*”**

Bethany Jacobs

Audre Lorde's *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (1982) radically revises maternal power, self-sufficiency, and social valuation for women and mothers in contemporary U.S. literature. In the aftermath of mid-20th century Women's Liberation, many works by women addressed the subject of motherhood by stressing mothers' powerlessness in their codified but often restricted social role. Lorde complicates this perspective by positing motherhood as an erotically powerful identity category, rather than a position of servility. Defining the erotic as a creative well-spring

of female empowerment, Lorde connects it to the creative power of the maternal while simultaneously refusing to treat mothers primarily as resources for others. Lorde's Erotic Mother is a resource to herself, able to draw on her own life force for sustenance and joy in an oppressive world. Zami thus offers a unique intervention for maternal studies, asserting a mythically powerful potential for women that is not reliant on providing without receiving, but on privileging one's own needs and capacities. While Lorde scholarship has firmly established the significance of maternal characters in the life of Zami's protagonist, Audre, my readings demonstrate Lorde's equal interest in Audre's desire to embody the characteristics of the Erotic Mother, regardless of whether or not she biologically produces children. Through Audre, Lorde models the powerful shift from using mothers for what they offer, to the mother using her own resources for herself.

### **'Nobody Heard Her Tears': Graphic Memoir as Intersubjective Space between Mother & Child**

Walter Lai

Two graphic memoirs – *Are You My Mother?: A Comic Drama* by Alison Bechdel (2012) and *Stitches: A Memoir* by David Small (2010) – are demonstrative of the mother or the child being the focus of a memoir's story. In her memoir, Bechdel reflexively investigates and reflects on her mother's life and their relationship to surmount the mother-daughter gulf between them, whereas Small's memoir focuses on his unhappy childhood and troubled adolescence, which his acerbic affectionless mother had contributed to. Drawing on psychoanalytic theory and comics studies, this paper explores these memoirs as an intersubjective space between mother and child. I argue that the graphic memoir is appropriated and engaged as an intersubjective space from which the memoirist works to explore the mother's ambivalence or dreaded harsh temperament towards the child, the memoirist. These explorations are situated within narratives that confront the mother's aims and motivations independent of both her child's demands and the mother-child relationship. As an intersubjective space, the graphic memoir contributes towards establishing a shared reality between mother and child from which the memoirist and the audience recognize and acknowledge the mother as more than a child's needed and/or dreaded object – that the ambivalent or dreaded harsh mother is also 'a person like me'.

### **Surviving Destruction: The Cathetic Mother-Daughter Relationship in Alison Bechdel's *Are You My Mother?***

Judith Lakämper

In her critically acclaimed graphic memoir *Are You My Mother? A Comic Drama*, graphic artist Alison Bechdel recounts her complicated relationship with her distant, but loving mother and its effect on her own processes of identity construction. The memoir's large repertoire of intertextual references to a variety of texts including Virginia Woolf's *To The Lighthouse* and famous psychoanalyst Donald W. Winnicott's theories of the transitional object and the "good-enough mother" provide important frameworks for a reading of the memoir as a technology of the self in a Foucaultian sense.

Throughout the text, the concept of cathexis plays a vital role in the memoirist's working through her relationship with her mother. The memoir ends with an image of mutual investment

in an imaginary play that, as Bechdel writes, “has given me the way out” (289). Feminist critic Teresa de Lauretis has defined cathexis as “something between an emotional commitment and a vested interest” (*Technologies of Gender* 16). This paper examines the way in which the mother and daughter in Bechdel’s graphic memoir are both emotionally committed to one another and following a vested interest in the way they structure their relationship. The construction of the narrative through both visual and verbal representations, depicting the mother as what Winnicott might call the “good-enough mother” emphasizes memoir writing, psychoanalysis, and dream interpretation as pivotal technologies of the self which facilitate the process of subject formation for both mother and daughter.

**Mothering Interrupted: Representations of Motherhood and South African Apartheid as Repressive Social Paradigms in Nadine Gordimer’s *July’s People* and *The House Gun***  
Ebony Olivia Lumumba

Nadine Gordimer readily admits her restricted ability as a white South African to holistically relay the magnitude of apartheid on all South Africans within her work. The author thoughtfully notes that what it is like to live as a black person under the oppression of apartheid, “I cannot tell you. No white person can” (Gordimer 108). As the result, Gordimer deliberately disavows any assumption for the experience of black South African’s as she recounts the country’s repressive society in her texts. The South African writer, instead, presents thematic links between her life, her social knowledge, and that of other groups to which she is not inherently associated. In *July’s People* (1981) and *The House Gun* (1998), Gordimer exhibits this technique through the universal and widely-understood function of mothering. The far-reaching conceptualization of motherhood and mothering positions this trope as a useful allegorical device in demonstrating the tumultuous state of post-Apartheid South Africa. Gordimer’s employment of motherhood as a thematic strain within both texts provides an exhibition of the life-altering effect of circumstances distinct to South Africa that transcends race and class.

Women across cultures find themselves shrouded in expectation and responsibility where motherhood is concerned. As mothers, women possess a substantial and necessary link to the cycle of life. Throughout gestation, the female body acts as the custodian of a developing fetus and, in many cultures, mothers are called upon to sustain the lives of their children beyond the birth canal. At moments when this prescribed motherhood falters, the cracks and fissures of the surrounding community can often be perceived within that failed mothering performance. While Gordimer abides within her self-inflicted racial parameters in only truly fleshing out the white mothers within each text with detail, the actions and traits of each woman illuminate a larger consciousness comprehensible to non-whites and non-mothers. The challenged and fragmentary mothering illustrated in both texts demonstrates the previously-divided black and white worlds of South Africa becoming a muddled grey and disheveling the perceived stability of whiteness in this particular postcolonial space.

## **ART-i-facts (Phase V): An artful inquiry on/into/through the experience of becoming a mother by way of ART (Assisted Reproductive Technologies)**

Kathy Mantas

In this session I use arts-based approaches to re-explore, re-present and make meaning of my experience of becoming a mother through Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART). In essence, I will share aspects of this story through the use of various personal ART-i-facts, images, narrative and/or poetic text. As well, I will tell aspects of this narrative/story through the lenses/voices of being an educated white woman, an artist/researcher/teacher, and an ethnic woman of a working class background. Additionally, I will juxtapose my story – a medicalized experience – with that of my maternal grandmother's. My intent is that this session will stimulate dialogue about some of the complexities inherent in becoming a mother through Assisted Reproductive Technologies (e.g., high-risk multiples pregnancy; surviving traumatic pregnancy and birth experiences; outcomes associated with technological/scientific intervention; mothering a twinless twin after the age of 40). As well, I hope that this session will create a safe space for these often silenced stories to emerge as well as raise questions about the process of becoming a mother through Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART). Finally, this collection of ART-i-facts (Phase V) also attempts to address the limits of text-based discourses and look closer at what creative processes and arts-based approaches have to offer when it comes to: diversifying maternal representations; deepening our understanding of such multi-layered and dis/embodied experiences; and fostering more humane medicine (with respect to reproduction through ART processes, multiples and mothering).

## **Birth Under Duress: Representations of childbirth in late 20<sup>th</sup> century fiction**

Barbara Mattar

This paper explores representations of childbirth as an experience of containment and duress in three literary texts published in the late twentieth century: Margaret Atwood's post-revolutionary fantasy *A Handmaid's Tale* (1985), Toni Morrison's slave narrative *Beloved* (1987) Peter Carey's black comedy *The Tax Inspector* (1991) and contrasts these tales of birth as horrifying, coercive and within the confines of patriarchal control with the short story 'Neighbours' from *Scission* by Tim Winton (1985). These texts moved beyond the two main literary traditions of the 1920s-late 1970s; that of depicting the birthing woman as heroine fulfilling her ultimate destiny as a woman or else the birthing woman reduced to a savage or animal by childbirth.

Seen comparatively, these four texts echo some of the concerns advocated by the growing natural childbirth movement of the 1970s and 1980s around woman centred care and unnecessary interventions by obstetricians and hospital policies. Birth as depicted in the fiction published around this period has focused on birthing women as being under male domination and threatened with violence. This paper argues that birth scenes are a useful critique of societal attitudes and concerns around the labouring and birthing body, maternal fluids and the role of women.

Consistent literary and cultural images of birth as horrifying, dominated by threat and the medical establishment can be argued to contribute to a culture that deems birth dangerous and in need of boundaries, and not the empowering life event that it can be.

### **Words of Consequence: Motherless Daughters, Feminism and the Cultural Texts of the 'New Momism'**

Natalie Morning

Motherless daughters are women who have experienced the loss of their mother at an age that defies the natural human experience of parent loss, generally before they have reached adulthood. With this loss, a daughter's path is forever altered, and I wish to assert that despite the recent societal focus on mothers and motherhood, the motherless daughter's experience has continued to become further marginalized. A reflection of this interest placed on motherhood is represented by the success of 'new momism' non-fictional texts which emphasize intensive mothering models via auto-narrative accounts of modern motherhood. The valorization of selfless and intensive motherhood places emphasis on the absolute need for the mother, but correspondingly offers no inclusion for those who have experienced motherloss. This continuation of the ideal of perfect altruistic motherhood provides no insight or understanding of mothers that are unable to provide that kind of love for their child.

Douglas and Michaels posit that these texts began to be seen as feminist texts themselves; however the ideals presented in the prescriptive texts of the new momism are gendered and commonly juxtaposed with feminist ideals of equality. This combined with the motherless daughter's pursuit of maternal guidance and community support make the cultural texts of the new momism easily digestible for the motherless daughter and hence, even more dangerous for these women to consume. In this paper, I use the auto-narrative perspective of a feminist motherless daughter to navigate texts of the new momism in order to demonstrate how they disregard the position of the motherless daughter by proclaiming that prolonged and intensive mothering is essential to successful development of children.

### **Problems and Prescriptions: Ideas of Motherhood in 1950s and 1960s Italian Print Media**

Penelope Morris

This paper explores the way that motherhood was represented and debated in Italian print media in the 1950s and 1960s - a time of burgeoning success especially for the illustrated magazine and also the period which, according to d'Amelia, saw the emergence of the stereotype of *mammismo*. The paper offers an entirely new perspective by taking as its primary focus the advice columns of a number of different publications and the contrasting discourses about mothers and motherhood which emerge from an analysis of problems they discuss and the prescriptions they offer.

In this period of great social upheaval in Italy, advice columns became hugely popular, with some magazines having as many as two or three such columns and a number of different advisers. Contrary to a persistent view of such columns as trivial, humorous and morally conservative, the paper will show that, in fact, they varied considerably and whilst a requirement to entertain was never absent, they were also a forum for serious discussion about a

wide range of topics and issues, including some which rarely found their way into the public sphere by any other means.

A study of these columns and of feature articles on motherhood reveals not only the normative prescriptions of some publications, but also the ways in which magazines and newspapers attempted to establish a genuine dialogue with their readers and, to varying degrees, to respond to their interests and anxieties. Unlike the more static prescriptions proposed by etiquette books and domestic manuals, advice columns can be seen as dynamic processes of negotiation which highlight the tension between preserving tradition and promoting modernity. In particular, the focus on the domestic sphere, on emotions and, in many cases, specifically on ‘women’s worlds’, makes them a unique resource for understanding attitudes towards, and the experience of, motherhood in the postwar period. The paper demonstrates the importance of not imposing a monolithic interpretation of motherhood on any given period, and, as both a synchronic and diachronic analysis of the way that motherhood is envisaged and debated, it gives an insight into the prevalence of the stereotype of *mammismo* in popular discourse and the way that it changed over the postwar period.

### **Breastfeeding Virgins and Other Maternal Ironies in the Martyrdom of St. Agatha**

Brooke Nelson

In the oil paintings that dot the walls of museums of European art, it is impossible to miss images of St. Agatha. She is typically shown in one of two poses: either naked facing the viewer with her breasts pinched between fiery tongs wielded by Roman torturers or standing fully clothed presenting a viewer with a silver tray on which lies her naked, removed breasts. Her hagiography is equally salacious. In the written version of her tale, her breasts are violently tortured and removed when she refuses to renounce her faith. Under the sado-eroticism that is all too typical for this kind of early Christian narrative there lies an unsettling current of maternal language that challenges the devout Christian reader to view the martyr simultaneously as both innocent virgin and breastfeeding mother.

It is the ultimate goal of this paper to use the Martyrdom of St. Agatha as a case example to demonstrate how Christian literature of the third century was working towards creating a new kind of mother for the early Christian community: the “virgin mother”. The virgin mother that emerges in tales like that of St. Agatha is not the same as the virgin mother model of the Virgin Mary, whose worship practices were also developing during time, because Agatha’s motherhood is distinguished by the fact that she has only spiritual children (repudiating the physical) and that her entire maternity is framed in non-corporeal terms. This paper will examine how virgin motherhood was constructed through literature as the ideal form of early Christian femininity, how the martyr narratives made this model of motherhood approachable and achievable for young Christian women, and how spiritual motherhood came to eclipse biological motherhood as the best form of maternity in patristic thought.



## **Are You Speaking For Me? The Maternal Figure in *Are You My Mother?***

Abigail Palko

The presentation that I propose, an analysis of the maternal figure in Alison Bechdel's graphic memoir, *Are You My Mother?: A Comic Drama*, is part of a larger project that centers on the ethical concerns involved when mothers and children choose to write about the relationship they share, thereby telling portions of each other's stories. The project in its entirety looks at mommy blogs, Alice Walker's essays and Rebecca Walker's memoir *Baby Love*, and Bechdel's *Are You My Mother?*

In the portion of the project that I will present at MIRCI, I provide a close textual reading of the appearances Bechdel's mother makes in the memoir. I am interested in the ways that Bechdel appropriates her mother's story in service of her own narrative, and I will consider ways that the text undercuts this appropriation. The metatextual elements provide important entry into Bechdel's text. This is a book about writing this book, an act that Bechdel uses metaphorically in her exploration of the daughter's relationship with the mother. The intertextual references are also crucial, as Bechdel triangulates the daughter-mother relationship through the father, and uses her previous work, *Fun House*, to provide this triangulation.

In my readings, I draw on Cristie Traina's work on the ethics of caregiving and touch, as well as theoretical formulations of the mother-child bond, including Rozsika Parker's psychoanalytical work on maternal ambivalence Sara Ruddick's philosophical discussion of maternal work, and Dianne Elise's psychoanalytical work on lesbian daughters and their mothers. Throughout, I will focus on the maternal figure and her role within the text and how it is mediated through the daughter's representation. This project ultimately aims to articulate an ethics of communication that can guide mothers and children in publicly discussing their relationships.

## **Helplessness as Victory: Maternal *Dharma* in Representations of Mothers, Motherhood and Mothering in Modern Hindi Literature**

Florence Pasche Guignard

Situated between traditional religious ideals and evolving socio-cultural norms, motherhood remains a central element of feminine identity in Indian society. Building upon the fundamental distinction between "motherhood" and "mothering" proposed by (mostly North American) scholars in motherhood studies, this contribution analyses maternal themes in a selection of contemporary Hindi literature. *Ai Larḳī* (1991) by Krishna Sobti (born in 1925) is a dialogue between a daughter and her dying mother. In *Māī* (1993), by Geetanjali Shree (born in 1957), another daughter is recounting childhood memories, with a focus on her mother, now sick and in her old age. Motherhood is a central theme in these two novels by award-winning Indian women authors. My analysis will focus on the relationship of older women, for whom motherhood was central to their identity as women, with their daughters who live in a society where the status of women and expectations about marriage and motherhood have evolved considerably. Remaining unmarried, they have embraced, respectively, writing and painting, and have not become mothers. In both novels, the tensions between tradition and modernity, at work in South Asian society at large, are played out within (extended) family relationships.

They show through the details of the every day life practice of care work. My analysis is based on the original Hindi text, but for this presentation at the MIRCI conference I will quote from the English translations of *Ai Laṛkī* (*Listen Girl!*, 2002) and *Māī* (2000) that made these writings accessible to an international readership.

### **Rendering Visible: Lesbian Mothering, Trauma, and Sequential Art**

Lorinda Peterson

In her introduction to “Drawing from Life” Jane Tolmie writes, “What is at stake in comic memoir and semi-autobiography is embodiment” (vii). In “Unclaimed Experience”, Cathy Caruth identifies trauma, initially a wound on the body, as an event, a wound on the mind that must be re-visited repeatedly through trauma memory in order to heal. In her book *Graphic Women: Life Narrative and Contemporary Comics*, Hilary Chute focuses on how the comic form lends itself to the work of testifying to, and representing trauma. Sequential art is increasingly important in creating archives about contemporary mothering. Depicting stories that focus on the targeted vernacular and spoken language mothers use to describe their mothering practice, helps deconstruct the existing patriarchal ideal of motherhood, making room for mother-centred experience. Incorporating images in narratives about mothering helps tell stories that cannot be fully articulated in words. The interplay of words and images in sequential art facilitates the construction of necessary and more meaningful mothering metaphors, in a form that is accessible to a wide variety of readers. This paper addresses my experience of creating comics as what Tolmie calls “a form of feminist art activism” (xvi), and the process of working memory through my body to render visible, traumatic lesbian mothering experience. It looks at the notion of embodied memory as a means to re-defining identity.

### **An Ambient—and Ambivalent—Poetics: The Ecomimesis of Writing Motherhood**

Katie Piper Greulich

Bound linguistically by historical narratives on the one hand, and the physical rooms of the home and nursery on the other, writing mothers are often controlled through a cultural narrative that continuously consigns them to rhetorical and environmental circumstances where the re-writing of that narrative becomes difficult, if not impossible. This paper argues that narratives of mothering and writing practices contest this double-bind by adopting a common aesthetic practice: *ecomimesis*, a rhetorical mode that attempts to construct the spatio-temporal frame of the writing moment. In tracing the use of this mode across two narratives of mothering and creativity—Elizabeth Podniek’s essay, “Basketball, Skating and Scholarship: Or How to Research from the Bench, The Rink, and the Car” (2012) and Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* (1929)—the essay compares the political potential of this rhetorical mode across mothering and writing narratives written a century apart. The yield of this analysis is threefold: a. provides a reading of Woolf’s seminal text that offers an aesthetic analysis of Woolf’s position as a literary foremother, branching away from the vast field of biographical criticism on this text b. extends the critique of ecomimesis from its nature-writing roots to examine the mode’s deployment in the feminist project and c. contributes a critical examination of non-fiction mothering narratives’ mechanics, a field in which little aesthetic analysis has been undertaken.

## **Whose Memories? A Critical Reflection on Life Writing and the Mother-Daughter Relationship**

Vanessa Reimer

This presentation shares excerpts of life writing from my ongoing dissertation research on evangelical purity culture. It seeks to illuminate how my relationship with my mother has shaped and challenged my perceptions of female sexuality, as well my larger spiritual worldview. It draws from various encounters and experiences that I shared with my mother throughout my adolescent and young adulthood years to elucidate the specific time, energy and skills that are required of women who perform religious enculturation—which I refer to as religious mother-work—as part of their daily maternal practice, in addition to the tensions and trials that such processes may effect within the mother-daughter relationship. Importantly, this presentation also critically reflects on the life writing process, particularly pertaining to the methodological and ethical implications of daughters “remembering,” representing and interpreting their mothers through autoethnography.

## **“Only in Complete Solitude Did She Feel Like A Woman:” Fractured Images of Domestic Life in Helena María Viramontes’s Short Fiction**

Maythee Rojas

In “Snapshots” and “The Broken Web” from her *The Moths and Other Stories* (1985) collection, Helena María Viramontes traces the lives of women who discover that the social roles they have assumed as wives and mothers have left them bereft of self-actualization. Viramontes uses a fragmented writing style to symbolize the absence of a location for female agency within a male-defined world and suggests that regaining a sense of wholeness requires an outright rejection of standard social conventions and the gendered expectations that shape both mainstream and Chicana/o culture. Situating the stories within the context of Chicana feminism and motherhood studies, I argue that Viramontes’ work offers a condemning look at the masculinist conceptualization of family within Chicano culture by exploring its impact on women’s mental health. Specifically, I trace how Viramontes attempts to re-write the script of maternity outside of existing discourses that situate Chicana mothers as silent and passive, subsequently leaving them vulnerable to their own annihilation. When the female protagonists face madness as a result of their marginalization and rash actions (one murders her husband and another threatens suicide), Viramontes turns to open-ended conclusions to emphasize the ambiguous state of women defined in-process and suggest that the characters embrace their solitude as alternate modes for survival and resistance, even as this shift requires stretching the limits of their personal sanity.

## **A Womb of Their Own: Popular Culture and the Normalising of Commercial Surrogacy**

Modhumita Roy

"Is your body just a consumer good, like any other? Can your genes and tissues be processed, sold and turned into profit?" asks Donna Dickenson in her book, *Body Shopping*. In the past few decades, these have emerged as urgent, ethical questions as the world of commerce and profit have encroached more and more into what is generally seen as "private" and "intimate" areas of our lives. One troubling site of convergence of profit and intimacy is "reprotech" or

reproductive technologies. Indeed, assisted reproductive technologies depend on the commercialization of the body and body parts. There is now a flourishing market for eggs, sperms and wombs. While the intimate labour of procreation is as old as life itself, the technologized science of reproduction is a modern phenomenon. My paper focuses on the market and marketing of intimate labour. In particular, I focus on the role of popular culture-sit-coms, movies, gossip magazines-in promoting and normalizing one of the more troubling aspect of assisted reproduction--"womb renting."

### **No, I Don't Have a Baby: Being Child-free in the Motherhood Studies Community** Sarah Sahagian

In this paper, I would like to employ the method of auto-ethnography to discuss the experience of living and working as a graduate student studying motherhood and maternal theory without having first been a biological or adoptive mother. I have been asked by many people why I, a childfree woman in her twenties, became interested enough in Motherhood Studies to make this the focus of my dissertation. Using this experience, I will examine the underlying assumptions embedded in such a question, as well as its resulting alienation of childfree women from The Motherhood Studies community. Ultimately, I conclude that the very act of asking a woman why she would study motherhood when she has no children is one that undermines the very nature and importance of motherhood as a topic of study. After all, one would never think to ask a political scientist why she felt the need to study government if she herself had never been in office.

### **Motherhood in African Women's Literature** Rose A. Sackeyfio

African Literature is a rich body of works that mirrors the African world from the pre-colonial era to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Throughout Africa's diverse regions and cultures, socially prescribed roles for women define their identity in society and womanhood is synonymous with motherhood. The 1960's ushered African women writers to center stage through fictional works that introduced feminist perspectives through diverse representations of women's lives. Writers such as Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, Ama Ata Aidoo and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie have produced classic works that portray the centrality of motherhood to women's identity in society. This paper will examine the image of African women in literature through the lens of cultural expectations of mothers and motherhood. Much of women's writing in Africa and the African diaspora explores female's response to their status in society. Feminist writers portray protagonists who develop agency to empower themselves in society outside the role of motherhood. Common themes in women's fiction depict mothers who conform to conventional roles of motherhood and domesticity, while other women grapple with conflicts and contradictions in their lives. This paper will critically analyze four novels by African women writers that includes *Efuru* (1966) by Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*, (1979) *Changes* by Ama Ata Aidoo(1991) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2004). African mothers in the selected works face challenges when they are childless, educated and career driven, or when they share a husband. Women characters chart their destiny and navigate conflicting demands of motherhood and self- fulfillment.

## **Mothing as an Embodied Practice: Contemporary Notions of the "Good" Mother Within a Neoliberal Framework**

Laura Saldanha

*It takes a village to raise a child*-Proverb

In late capitalist societies, women who are mothers are increasingly expected to be able to “do it all”, and to do it well: have a career and work outside the home; raise their children; and, do the majority of the domestic labor in the home. This is nothing new, but a widespread emphasis on societal expectations of the "good" mother is continuously raising the bar for new mothers. Several factors are responsible for this: an increase in "expert knowledge"; social discourses regarding notions of "good" mothering; and, neoliberal policies which assign personal responsibility to individuals for their outcome, and have eroded post-world war II social security programs. While it is challenging for upper and middle class mothers to maintain the "good" mother façade, women who are recent immigrants, single mothers, and those who are of a lower socioeconomic status are finding it nearly impossible to "properly" raise their children in a social climate that offers them little support. This paper will analyze contemporary conditions of mothering through the narratives of women of various ages and backgrounds who feel marginalized, in order to argue that while it may take a village to raise a child women who are mothers are being increasingly isolated and left to assume complete responsibility of themselves and their children. In essence, we have created a child-rearing atmosphere that is the antithesis of the proverbial “village” idealized as necessary to raise a child.

## **Queer Mothers, Heterosexual Narratives: Pregnancy and Plot in Contemporary Women's Memoirs**

Robin Silbergeld

Cherrie Moraga’s *Waiting in the Wings* is subtitled “Toward a Queer Motherhood” yet, beyond the author’s sexuality, very little is queer about the memoir. It is rather a fairly predictably plotted narrative of pregnancy, the premature birth of her son, and struggle between her life as a mother and life as a writer. There is very little mention of her partner, called Ella in the memoir, beyond a few references to their fighting. Carole Maso’s *The Room Lit by Roses*, by contrast, works to disrupt the predictable, chronological account of pregnancy through self-consciously fragmented and dilatory style, even as it, too, leaves discussion of Maso’s partner and their attempts to co-parent largely outside the narrative, ending, as it does, with the immediate postpartum period. Situating these texts in conversation with more recent narratives by lesbian mothers, such as A.K. Summers’ *Pregnant Butch*, this essay explores the relationship between narrative form and the female form, between gender and genre, in the space of queer motherhood memoir. Toward this end, I frame this analysis in theoretical discussions of narrative and sexuality, such as Judith Roof’s *Come As You Are* and Peter Brooks’ *Reading for the Plot*. How do pregnancy memoirs attempt, to borrow Virginia Woolf’s phrase, “to tell the truth about the body?” How do they assume pregnancy to be the “real” experience of inhabiting a female body and how do they resist such essentialist logic? How do they make use of and interrogate the form of the memoir to do so? How are pregnancy memoirs complicated by queer mother-writers, and to what extent do they remain co-opted by heteronarrative norms?

This essay will explore these and related questions to argue that narrative structure is itself a pregnant site for feminist intervention.

### **“Where did she get that baby?” The erasure of dis/abled mothers in social media and mommy blogs**

Melanie Stone

In a time where suffering has become a requirement of “good” motherhood, and mommy blogs have offered up significant opportunity to showcase intensive parenting techniques in detail, it has become nearly impossible to find public blogs about mothers with disabilities who have interdependent relationships with caregivers, family, friends and their children. The dis/abled mommy bloggers that you can find online have been held up as “heroic” for existing at all or neoliberal idols in “overcoming” dis/ability with positive attitudes and even more intensive parenting techniques. Social media has provided us insight into new “good mother” rhetoric that is both ableist as well as dismissive of any bodily variation or assisted parenting.

Indeed social media discourse has helped erase the dis/abled mother, but where can we find examples of dis/abled mothers using social media to tell alternative tales? How do these blogs speak back to the intensive mothering rhetoric and allow us insight into nurturing assistance and other collaborative parenting practices? This paper uses feminist disability theory to contextualize the ableism in the mommy blog movement and to help analyze the work of several dis/abled feminist bloggers, who are challenging conventional ideas of parenting and speaking back to the intensive mothering movement.

### **Emily Rapp’s Little Seal: Regarding the Pain of Others**

Jane Tolmie

In 2012 I wrote a Huffpo blog entry about mommy blogging as a form of art activism related to children’s incurable or terminal illnesses/conditions. I ended that blog with a brief consideration of Emily Rapp’s blog Little Seal, about mothering her son Ronan after his diagnosis with Tay-Sachs disease, an incurable genetic condition. Since then Ronan has died and Rapp has published her revised blog essays in the memoir *The Still Point of the Turning World*. Other essays have followed the book. Ronan is the subject of her art, for the time being. Some people have had problems with this, something that will not surprise anyone who has read Susan Rubin Suleiman’s 1979 piece on Writing and Motherhood.

What is it about mother as artist that continues to attract negative criticism, as if the child is at risk, trivialized or compromised by maternal creativity? This is a particularly interesting question to revisit in the context of the maternal memoir based around a dying child. The ethics of memoir writing, always problematic, become particularly complicated when textual and visual life is given to a silent, dying other, not just one who does not speak now but one who will never speak. “This book is Rapp’s, and Ronan’s, enduring gift of selves for the rest of us,” says Antonya Nelson. But that is false. It is Rapp’s literary, artistic book about her dying baby, and critics – and mommy blamers – must face up to that. Readers and critics must also face up to the forms of grievability and precarity that are published and discussed, and those that are not, in today’s cultural climates.

## **Thinking Back Through Our Mothers: Contemporary Memoir and Abortion**

Mary Thompson

This paper compares the structurally central concern of abortion in two recent memoirs by women confronting mother-loss and love: Cheryl Strayed's *Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail* (2012) and Terry Tempest Williams' *When Women Were Birds: Fifty-Four Meditations on Voice* (2012). In doing so, I re-assess Judith Wilt's argument from *Abortion, Choice and Contemporary Fiction: The Armageddon of the Maternal Instinct* (1990), to argue that in these contemporary memoirs, abortion raises questions for daughters about how their mothers' lives might have been different with greater reproductive choices. Contemporary women writers, apparently free of the anxiety of "potential not-being" that abortion supposedly provokes (Wilt), imagine their mothers' reproductive lives in order to clarify their own commitment to abortion rights and women's self-realization.

## **Motherhood in Patriarchy: Abolishing the Matrilinear Order**

Mariam Irene Tazi-Preve

My work, "Motherhood in Patriarchy" pioneers the argument that the western understanding of motherhood is a patriarchal one based on a long historical tradition of subjection and institutionalization. The thesis is that motherhood is to be eliminated, both symbolically as well as in reality, in favor of artificially created motherhood – as an institution or as in vitro fertilization.

The approach is interdisciplinary, encompassing the fields of matriarchal studies, feminist political theory and philosophy, history and psychoanalysis. A presentation of the social status of mothers (e.g. overload, mother-blaming, poverty of single mums) in Austria serves as an introduction to exemplify the Western institutionalized motherhood. Philosophical-historical reflection on the development of motherhood includes a critical analysis of basic concepts of political science, such as body, nature and culture, ego, state and economy.

I proceed from the historical fact that the Greek political concept was violently imposed on the existing matriarchal social structures, which were organized around female clans. Studying motherhood is especially explosive because this approach also breaches a taboo within feminist political theory and the discourse within a large portion of the women's movement. Like Adrienne Rich first pointed out, I will start the debate by exposing mother's suffering today. This work brings mothers to the beginning of a new orientation, a new comprehension of civil order, instead of seeing things the way these issues are treated in political practice and in scientific study, as a social problem of the fringe of society.

Based on my book it will be demonstrated that new technologies as well as the dominant economic and political structures are all parts of the attempt of the patriarchy to eliminate the creative capacity of the world, of life and of nature and replace it with supposedly better and more perfect forms of life.

## **The Perfect Mother**

Melinda Vandenberg Giles

*She drew a circle on the windowpane. She looked out through the tiny hole she'd created. She saw them standing there. Fighting. Like usual. She warmed her icy fingers in her lap. And she waited. She seemed to do a lot of waiting. Normally she didn't mind so much. She could occupy her mind with all kinds of stories. She was good at doing that. But this time it was cold. This time they'd forgotten to turn on the car first before having their argument.*

This short story attempts to explore some of the normative stereotypes associated with white middle-class conceptualizations of the “perfect mother” in an attempt to problematize categorical definitions and associations. Through fiction, the narrative forces the reader to counter his/her own bias and additionally the inherent bias of the story characters to investigate and complicate any definitive, class-based or racialized “perfect mother” constructions.

## **The “Good” Christian Mother: Manufacturing an Unattainable Ideal**

Mandi Veenstra

If it is the concern of feminist theology to bring current questions that effect the contemporary lives of women to the forefront, than it is the goal of this paper to address the embedded term that is, the “good” Christian mother. The adjective “good” attached to the identity of Christian mother, is a social construction, manufactured as an unattainable ideal with purpose, including the intent of stirring up not only desires but emotions such as fear, guilt, and blame. In an analysis of Biblical principles and Scriptures concerning mothering, ideals are not apparent, demonstrating Biblical representation and recognition of the variance in experience within practices of mothering across aspects of time and space and social factors including, class, culture, age, and so on. As a social institution and player, capitalism, with its focus on the Profit Ethic, successfully plays a role in manufacturing, perpetuating, and capitalizing on the creation and effects of establishing ideals and stereotypes. A quick snapshot of three current businesses, Joyce Meyer Ministries, Thirty-One Gifts, and Mary & Martha, demonstrate the intersection of capitalism and Christianity, with all three highlighting specific tenets responsible for blurring conceptions of mothering identities, including their focus on ideologies of domesticity, in attempts of upholding proposed monolithic identities of what constitutes the “good” Christian mother.

## **Mothering as Containment Strategy in Lori Lansens' *The Girls***

Kathleen Venema

Lori Lansens' 2005 novel *The Girls* presents itself as the shared autobiography of conjoined craniopagus twins, Rose and Ruby Darlen. Deceptively simple, the novel grapples with existential questions of biological chance and grievous loss, while exploring the tensions between surviving and thriving, “normate” and physically disabled (Thomson 5-9), intimacy and “enfreakment” (55-63). Structurally, *The Girls* acquires accumulating affective force by repeatedly undermining narrative expectations. We are introduced to the twins' adoptive mother Aunt Lovey on page 5 and understand quickly that she is now deceased, but when, late



in the narrative, we learn the shocking details of her death, we realize that – among other things – we are reading an extended eulogy for a genius of maternal care (Lewiecki-Wilson and Cellio 3).

Indeed, the novel's core is its sustained focus on mothers and mothering, children and mothers lost and found. Of her conjoined twin, that is, Rose declares early on, "Ruby is my sister. And strangely, undeniably, my child" (*The Girls* 3), but it is Ruby, much later, who refers first to the daughter Rose gave up for adoption after the twins' only sexual encounter (163), a narrative discovery that has dramatic reverberations both 'backward' and 'forward' through the novel. Distinguishing between patriarchal motherhood and feminist mothering (Podnieks and O'Reilly), I use Tobin Siebers' theory of "complex embodiment" (22 and throughout) and Suzanne Bost's work on the complex bodies where disability and mothering meet, to explore the ways in which *The Girls* tells its multi-layered story of extraordinary bodies powerfully mothered and powerfully mothering.

### **Mother Bodies, Marigolds and Dirt: Trans-corporeality in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye***

Anissa Wardi

In the closing moments of Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, the adult Claudia, employing the discourse of the biophysical world, reflects on Pecola's descent into madness:

"And now when I see her searching the garbage—for what? The thing we assassinated? I talked about how I did not plant the seeds too deeply, how it was the fault of the earth, the land, of our town. I even think now that the land of the entire country was hostile to marigolds that year. This soil is bad for certain kinds of flowers. Certain seeds it will not nurture, certain fruit it will not bear. . . ." (206).

Claudia, questioning whether she and Frieda failed to utter the right magic words over the seeds or planted them too deeply in the earth, concludes in terse, evocative language: "The seeds shriveled and died; her baby too" (1). By conflating bodies and plants, Claudia recognizes that human corporeality is tethered to the natural world, a concept that feminist theorist Stacy Alaimo, in *Bodily Natures*, refers to as trans-corporeality. This paper examines moments of trans-corporeal exchange in *The Bluest Eye* (i.e. marigold seeds and embryos, maternal bodies and earth, animals and humans, racist ideology and dirt) and in so doing provides an ecocritical reading of motherhood and material interconnectivity in Morrison's inaugural novel.

### **Isolated Mothers in the Fiction and Memoirs of Joan Didion**

Kate Williams

While Joan Didion pointedly rejected the second-wave feminist movement in her 1972 essay "The Women's Movement" and has received little attention from feminist scholars, this paper argues for a feminist reading and critique of her writing, particularly of motherhood as represented in her fiction and memoirs. Didion is deeply concerned with issues of mothering, and feminist scholarship provides tools for us to analyze them. Didion's mothers experience themselves as out of control and unable to "mother" their children in any traditional sense.

Instead of taking action to protect their children, they create a false nostalgia to protect themselves from the reality that they cannot provide sanctuary. Didion's 2011 memoir *Blue Nights* similarly reflects on the author's own anxieties of failing as a mother. Like her fictional characters, Didion focuses on past moments of motherhood, especially in relation to the loss of her daughter. However, unlike her characters, Didion has the ability to recognize what is a created or forced nostalgia. I will specifically focus on Didion's 1970 novel *Play it as it Lays*, her 1996 novel *The Last Thing He Wanted*, and her 2011 memoir *Blue Nights* to argue that Didion's representation of motherhood as a condition of alienation produces an implicit feminist critique of twentieth- and twenty-first century norms of motherhood.

# Keynote Biographies

## (Alphabetical by Last Name)

**Jowita Bydlowska** is the author of the bestselling memoir, *Drunk Mom*. She was born in Warsaw, Poland and moved to Canada as a teenager. She's written for a number of publications—from The Times magazine UK to FASHION to Chatelaine. Her next book, a novel called GUY, will be published in 2016. She lives in Toronto with her family.

**Lissa M. Cowan** is the author of *Milk Fever*, a novel, works of non-fiction and co-translator of *Words That Walk in the Night*, by Quebec poet Pierre Morency. She received her M.A. in English Studies from l'Université de Montréal and has received awards for her writing from the University of Victoria's Writing Department and from The Banff Centre. Her research interests include ecological feminism, the 18th century, storytelling, creative writing and historical female activists. She lives part-time in Toronto, Canada and on Vancouver Island.

Dr. **Rachel Epp Buller** is a feminist-art historian-printmaker-mama-of-three whose art and scholarship speak to these intersections. She lectures, curates, and publishes widely on topics of mothering and the maternal body in contemporary art. Her books include *Reconciling Art and Mothering*, *Mothering Mennonite*, and *Have Milk, Will Travel: Adventures in Breastfeeding*. She is currently Assistant Professor of Visual Arts and Design at Bethel College (KS/USA), a board member of the National Women's Caucus for Art, and a regional coordinator of The Feminist Art Project.

**Laurie Kruk** is the author of three books of poetry: *Theories of the World* (Netherlandic, 1992), *Loving the Alien* (YSP, 2006) and *My Mother Did Not Tell Stories* (Demeter, 2012). Her latest book is described as weaving “tales that powerfully uncover the necessity of vocalizing that which is learned, experienced, and traditionally unshared” (*ARC Poetry Magazine*, online). Her poetry and fiction have been published in over 25 literary journals or anthologies to date. She teaches Canadian Literature at Nipissing University in North Bay, Ontario. For more information, see [lauriekruk.wordpress.com](http://lauriekruk.wordpress.com).

**Tricia McCallum**, a Glasgow-born Canadian, is an award-winning poet and freelance writer and a frequent Huffington Post Blogger.

McCallum has authored two books of poetry, *The Music of Leaving*, being launched today, and *Nothing Gold Can Stay: A Mother and Father Remembered*, in 2011.

She is particularly proud of twice winning the member-voted poetry competition at [goodreads.com](http://goodreads.com) with her poems “Thirst” in 2011 and “There’s Always the Guy” in 2012.

**Linda Rosenbaum** lives on Toronto Island where she raised her family. She is an award-winning writer, has worked in TV and documentary films, and advocates for children with special needs. Her story about raising Michael won the 2013 Canada Writes Reader's Choice award for creative non-fiction. [lindarosenbaum.com](http://lindarosenbaum.com)

**Robin Silbergleid** is the author of the memoir *Texas Girl* and two chapbooks of poetry, *Pas de Deux: Prose and Other Poems* and *Frida Kahlo, My Sister*. Her poems, essays, and scholarship can be found widely online and in print. She is an associate professor of English and Director of Creative Writing at Michigan State University.

# Regular Presenters' and Authors' Biographies

(Alphabetical by Last Name)

**Nargis Ara:** Associate Professor, B.Sc, B.Ed, MSc, M.Ed, Ph.D, working on second PhD, Publications on line. Conferences attended: US & Canada at University of Guelph, York and Ryerson. Workshop attended, Toronto, Canada *TOEFL*, *iBT* Resource Center. Research interest: Early childhood education, Immigrant mothers and motherhood, self efficacy & Cognitive development of students, Teachers & technology.

**Zarena Aslami** is associate professor and director of graduate studies in the Department of English at Michigan State University and the author of *The Dream Life of Citizens: Late Victorian Novels and the Fantasy of the State* (Fordham).

**Berit Åström** is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Language Studies, Umeå University, Sweden. Currently working on a project on dead mothers in literature, her most recent publication is “‘Sucking the Corrupte Mylke of an Infected Nurse’: regulating the dangerous maternal body,” forthcoming in the *Journal of Gender Studies*.

**Janel Atlas** graduated with a BA in English Literature from Messiah College (PA) in 2004 and worked as a freelance writer and editor through 2012. She is currently an MA student of English at the University of Delaware. Amongst her many publications, she is most proud of her nonfiction collection of essays about pregnancy loss, *They Were Still Born: Personal Stories About Stillbirth* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2010; trade paperback coming out summer 2014). Her research interests include the pregnant slave body; representations of miscarriage, stillbirth, and infant loss in 19th century American literature; sentimental discourse; women's studies; and fugitive slave narratives.

**Betty Baba**, Part-Time Professor at the University of Ottawa. My teaching and research interests are related to my expertise as a researcher and a specialist in both western and non western feminist Women research topic on abortion in the USA since 1973, modern slavery, polygamy in Canada, violence against women. Her publications are in English and French of Books, Articles, and a Co-editor of feminist journeys. “I got there through women studies” Feminist Journeys «Diversity: Racialization of women’s labour in Canada».

**Linn Baran** is a writer, editor, researcher and community educator passionate about everything related to feminism, activism and mothering. Her chapter entitled “Mother Outlaws: Building Communities of Empowered Feminist Mothers in the Mother’hood” is included in the collection *The 21st Century Motherhood Movement* (2011 Demeter Press). A graduate of York University with degrees in English Literature and Women's Studies, Linn lives with her partner and their teenage son in the Beaches community of Toronto. She can be found "online" sharing her thoughts as "Mother Outlaw".

**Erin Bell** is ABD at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, where she works as a graduate student assistant in the Writing, Research & Technology Zone. She is the mother of four children and her area of concentration is Twentieth Century American Literature, gender studies, and feminist theory.

**Rita Bode** is associate professor in the Department of English Literature at Trent University. Her maternal scholarship includes published book chapters on Sandra Cisneros, and L. M. Montgomery. Her main research interests centre on 19th- and early 20th-century British and American women writers, particularly in their transatlantic contexts.

**Deborah Byrd** is Professor of English and Women's & Gender Studies at Lafayette College, where she also serves as Director of the Center for Community Engagement. She has published on mentoring programs for young low-income moms, on 19th and 20th-century literature, and on feminist, maternal, and community-based learning pedagogy.

**Roxana L. Cazan** is a Visiting Assistant Professor of English and World Literature at St. Francis University in Pennsylvania. She graduated with her PhD from Indiana University Bloomington in July 2014, where she wrote her dissertation entitled "Contested Motherhood: The Politics of Gender, Ethnicity, and Identity in Contemporary Romanian-American Literature and Culture." A chapter of her dissertation was recently awarded the Graduate Student Essay Prize by the Society for Romanian Studies. Her scholarly work was published in *Women Studies Quarterly* and *Neophilologus*. Roxana is also a published poet and translator, and her work appeared in *Sojourn*, *The Portland Review*, *The Madison Review*, *Barnwood International*, and *Harpur Palate*.

**Dr. Tiffany Chenneville** is an Associate Professor and Chair of Psychology at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg with a Joint Appointment in Pediatrics. She studies pediatric HIV. Dr. Chenneville also is a licensed psychologist, a nationally certified school psychologist, and a mother with a passion for creative writing.

**Natalja Chestopalova** is part of the Ph.D. in Communication and Culture Program at York and Ryerson Universities in Toronto. Her research is informed by popular culture aesthetics and psychoanalysis, and focuses on the transformative sensory experience and multimodality in literature, film, and graphic novel medium. Her recent works include a paper on trauma, affect, and plasticity in film at the PCA ACA Conference, and a paper on architectural capital in multimodal literature at the ACLA. Her publications appeared in the *White Wall Review* and *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Modernism*.

**Freema Elbaz-Luwisch** (Ph.D. in Educational Theory from the University of Toronto), has been a professor in the Faculty of Education, University of Haifa, and teaches courses in narrative inquiry, multiculturalism, autobiography and teacher development. She has published numerous articles and book chapters, and four books; she is co-author (with Xin Li and Carola Conle) of *Shifting Polarized Positions: A Narrative Approach in Teacher Education* (Peter Lang, 2009). Her most recent book, *Auto/biography and Pedagogy: memory and presence in teaching*, was published by Peter Lang in 2014.

**May Friedman** is an assistant professor at Ryerson University, teaching in the school of social work and in the graduate program in communication and culture. May lives in downtown Toronto with her family.

Dr. **Karen Gold** is a reproductive health social worker and educator at Women's College Hospital in Toronto. She completed doctoral studies in narrative medicine in 2013 and has published on feminist therapy discourse, personal narrative in professional practice, narrative pedagogy and poetic inquiry.

**Kate Greenway** is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Education at York University. Her feature article "When is a Reunion?" was published in the Spring 2013 Adoption Constellation magazine, and she will also be a part of the upcoming Telling Truths anthology. She was 2012 winner of the inaugural MIRCI Gustafson Graduate Student Conference Paper Award for "Ephemera: The Searchings of an Adopted Daughter." Her thesis "The Brooch of Bergen-Belsen: A Journey of Historiographic Poiesis" won the Graduate Education Major Research Prize at York for 2009. Her interests include arts-based research, remembrance and memorialization, mother-daughter relationships and adoption search issues.

**Diana L. Gustafson** is an Associate Professor of Social Science and Health in the Faculty of Medicine at Memorial University, Canada. Her research and teaching interests include the health of disadvantaged populations, and feminist research methodologies. She is the editor of *Unbecoming mothers: The social production of maternal absence* (Routledge Press, 2005). Her most recent book, *Reproducing women: Family and health across three generations* (co-authored with Marilyn Porter and published by Fernwood Press, 2012) explores women's reproductive lives as narrated by three generations of Canadian women.

**Valerie Heffernan** is a Lecturer in German at the National University of Ireland Maynooth. In her teaching and research, she focuses on contemporary writing by women and contemporary Swiss literature. She is currently in receipt of an Irish Research Council grant for a research project on "The Cultural Transmission of Motherhood in Europe".

**Linda Hunter** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Guelph as well as the Department's Undergraduate Coordinator. Dr. Hunter has published journal articles on the depiction of gender in the media, HIV awareness health campaigns, community engaged research, young mothers, communication and HIV prevention, the support needs for HIV positive women along with articles on motherhood and HIV focusing on healthism, stigma, disclosure and educational opportunities. Dr. Hunter is currently researching teaching methods and the application of interdisciplinary programs such as fine art, to the study of sociology, with a focus on the representation of motherhood.

**Dr. Jacobs** is a postdoctoral fellow in English at the University of Oregon. She situates her scholarship at the nexus of multiethnic literature, critical race theory, theories of gender and sexuality, and maternal literary studies. At the University of Oregon, she teaches 20th century multiethnic literature and writing.

**Judith Lakämper** is a doctoral candidate at Wayne State University. Her dissertation entitled "Affective Dissonance: (Post)Feminism and Popular Cultural Expressions of Motherhood" examines how the turn to affect in the humanities can complement a deconstructivist feminist analysis of discursive constructions of motherhood.

**Walter Lai** is a doctoral student from the Communication & Culture joint graduate program with Ryerson and York universities. His research is informed by life-writing, cultural and media studies, and psychoanalysis, studying how we define auto/biographical objects such as identity, ailment, trauma, truth, and our subsequent relations to them, within the creative space of comics, literature, and other media.

**Ebony Lumumba** is currently an Assistant Professor of English Literature at Tougaloo College in Jackson, MS as well as an English Literature doctoral student at the University of Mississippi. Ebony received her bachelor's degree from Spelman College and her Master of Arts in English from Georgia State University. Ebony's research and writings focus mainly upon Postcolonial Literatures of the Global South (American South, South Africa, and South Asia). Her work is most concerned with the altering effects of postcolonial stress on foodways and encounters of mothering within texts of these spaces and communities.

**Kathy Mantas**, teacher, artist-researcher, and mother, is currently an Assistant Professor of Education at Nipissing University in North Bay, Ontario. Kathy's research interests include: ongoing teacher development; teacher knowledge and identity; adult education; arts education; artful and creative inquiry; creativity in teaching-learning contexts; holistic and wellness education; and women's health issues.

**Barbara Mattar** is a PhD candidate at the Australian Catholic University. She had the empowering experience of birthing two children, however found many new mothers around her lacked confidence in their birthing and lactating bodies. Her thesis explores the varied representations of pregnancy, birth and breast-feeding in contemporary fiction.

**Natalie Morning** is a second year M.A candidate in the joint Communication and Culture program at Ryerson and York University. She is a women's rights activist and motherless daughter. Her current research concerns motherless daughters and art as a tool for community building. Her research interests include parental loss, memoir writing, motherhood ambivalence and feminist considerations of mothering.

**Penelope Morris** is Senior Lecturer in Italian in the School of Modern Languages and Cultures at the University of Glasgow, Scotland, UK. Her research interests lie in the social and cultural history of modern Italy, with a particular emphasis on the history and writing of women, the intersection between the public and the private, and the role of emotions in history. She has published a monograph and various articles on the writer and resistance activist Giovanna Zangrandi [<http://giovannazangrandi.com>] (*Giovanna Zangrandi: Una vita in romanzo*, Cierre, 2000) and has edited an interdisciplinary study of women in postwar Italy, *Women in Italy 1945-1960*, Palgrave, 2006. She also works on the writer Alba de Céspedes. With Francesco Ricatti and Mark Seymour, she has co-edited two volumes on the history of emotions: *Italy and the Emotions*, Special issue of *Modern Italy* 17 (2), 2012 and *Politica ed emozioni nella storia d'Italia dal 1848 ad oggi*, Viella, 2012. Since 2012, she has been Principal Investigator on an Arts and Humanities Research Council Research Network which investigates motherhood in Italy: *La mamma: Interrogation of a National Stereotype* [<http://lamammaitaliana.wordpress.com/>].



**Brooke Nelson** is interested in the construction of motherhood in the early Christian world, particularly how martyr narratives were used by patristic thinkers to develop models of Christian motherhood that were not quite Roman and not quite un-Roman. She is the final stages of planning for her dissertation defense at Claremont Graduate University.

**Abigail Palko** is the Director of Undergraduate Studies for the Gender Studies Program at the University of Notre Dame, as well as an Affiliate Faculty member of the Department of Africana Studies and Fellow of the Keough-Naughton Institute for Irish Studies. Her research focuses on 20th-century Irish and Caribbean women novelists, with particular attention to their contestations of motherhood as institution and postcolonial questionings of heteronormative sexuality. Her courses explore gender issues in literature and motherhood studies. In addition to practicing feminist mothering in her daily life with her partner and daughter, she is thrilled to be serving as the 2013-2015 co-chair of the Feminist Mothering Caucus for NWSA.

**Florence Pasche Guignard** has received her PhD in the study of religions from the University of Lausanne in 2012. Gender, the body, material culture and media are her privileged domains of inquiry and South Asia is one her areas of expertise. Her current research explores the construction of maternal identity, emerging rituals of fertility, pregnancy and birth, motherhood and mothering in relation to religion and technology.

**Lorinda Peterson** is a PhD student in the Cultural Studies Department at Queen's University. Her recent Master's thesis combined memoir and academic writing to explore specific mothering practice at the intersection of life experience and contemporary theory, also illustrating how metaphor and affect convey trauma memory in works of art.

**Katie Piper Greulich** is a PhD student at Michigan State University. Her work focuses on the intersections among science, nature and aesthetics in Modern and Contemporary literature, with a special interest in experimental writing by women.

**Vanessa Reimer** is a PhD Candidate in York University's Graduate Program in Gender, Feminist and Women's Studies. She is the co-editor of Demeter Press texts *Mother of Invention* (2013) and *The Mother-Blame Game* (forthcoming in 2015). Her research interests include feminist studies in religion, girlhood sexuality, and mothering.

**Maythee Rojas** is a Professor of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies at California State University, Long Beach. She is the author of *Women of Color and Feminism* (2009). Her work has appeared in *Feminist Teacher*, *Frontiers*, *MELUS*, *Women's Studies Quarterly* and *Notable American Women*. She is a past president of the National Association for Ethnic Studies (NAES).

**Modhumita Roy** is Associate Professor of English at Tufts University where she teaches Literatures of Empire, Post-colonial and Feminist Theory. Her research interests include commercial surrogacy and globalization.

**Sarah Sahagian** is a PhD candidate in Gender, Feminist and Women's studies at York University, where she is currently writing her dissertation on the mothering of inter-ethnic

children. Her writing has appeared in such publications as *Chasing Rainbows*, a popular anthology on gender fluid parenting, as well as *The Huffington Post*, the pop culture website *Comments Enabled* and the *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative*. Sarah also is the co-editor of the Demeter Press book *Mother of Invention: How Our Mothers Influenced Us as Feminist Academics and Activists*.

**Rose Sackeyfi** is an Associate Professor in the Department of English at Winston Salem State University. She completed a Ph.D. (1992) in Education at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria where she taught for 10 years. Her research interest includes Women's Studies and the literature of African and African Diaspora women.

**Laura Saldanha** is a first-year graduate student at Concordia University, in Social and Cultural Anthropology and will be writing her thesis on mothering. She is also the mother of two pre-school aged children, whom have both inspired her and exhausted her. Laura first became interested in studying mothering when she realized, after having her first child, that it is a complex area of social life that is often discussed, but seldom understood. She sees this conference as an opportunity to learn more, and to build on ideas for her upcoming fieldwork.

Laura's work reflects on modern western neoliberal conceptualizations of "good" mothering. In her undergraduate degree, she wrote an Honours thesis which analyzed the narratives of mothers of young children who were University students preparing to enter the workforce. Many of the women Laura interviewed reported feeling very discouraged as new parents here (in Montreal). This was often because they were immigrants with no family in Canada, and found it incredibly difficult to not only navigate the social system which differs drastically from their own but also to adapt to the cultural differences in raising children here.

**Robin Silbergleid** is the author of the memoir *Texas Girl* and two chapbooks of poetry, *Pas de Deux: Prose and Other Poems* and *Frida Kahlo, My Sister*. Her poems, essays, and scholarship can be found widely online and in print. She is an associate professor of English and Director of Creative Writing at Michigan State University.

**Melanie Stone** is a first year PhD Student at Western University in the department of Women's Studies and Feminist Research. She has an MA in Critical Disability Studies from York University, an MA in Women's Studies at Western University. She is a single-mom to a six year old daughter and still figuring out how to navigate grad school without having to bribe her daughter for study time with bubbles or cookies for breakfast.

**Jane Tolmie** is Associate Professor and Undergraduate Chair of Gender Studies and Program Coordinator of Cultural Studies at Queen's University. Her current research is on memory and trauma in contemporary women's comics and memoirs. She has new creative work out in *Strange Horizons* and *The Dalhousie Review* and a display of her ongoing poetry/painting collaboration with British Columbia artist Perry Rath goes up at the Two Rivers Art Gallery, BC, in November. <http://www.queensu.ca/gnds/tolmie.php>

**Mary Thompson** is Associate Professor of English at James Madison University where she teaches courses in women's literature and feminist theory. Her research interests include literary and popular representations of women and reproductive justice.

**Mariam I. Tazi-Preve** was born in Innsbruck, Austria. She lives in the USA and Austria. She studied Political Science/Women's Studies and Romance Studies at the University of Innsbruck and has a PhD in Political Science from there. She is teaching at the University of Applied Sciences (MCI) in Innsbruck and the University of Vienna. Her work is part of the new interdisciplinary paradigm of the "Critical Theory of Patriarchy", developed at the University of Innsbruck, Austria. In the academic year 2011-12 she was a visiting professor at the University of New Orleans. She is the author of *Motherhood in Patriarchy* (2013), several other books (in German) and numerous edited works and articles. Currently Mariam is working on a new book on a critique of the nuclear family.

**Melinda Vandenberg Giles** is a PhD candidate in socio-cultural anthropology at the University of Toronto. Her research involves working with mothers who are living with their children in Toronto motel rooms. She is investigating interconnections between public policy, dominant neoliberal narratives and lived realities. She edited a book titled *Mothering in the Age of Neoliberalism* published by Demeter Press in 2014. Her work has also been published in several Demeter Press collections and MIRCI (Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement) journal issues, in addition to the publication of a two-part series regarding mothers experiencing homelessness in Toronto for *Dispatches International*. She was a Research Associate for the University of Toronto Munk School of Global Affairs Comparative Program on Health and Society (CPHS) where she has two publications in their Working Paper Series and is co-editor for the 2012-2013 CPHS Working Paper Series.

**Mandi Veenstra** is a sociology graduate student at Queen's University, and a mother of three young children, with a passion for research in the fields of motherhood and mothering practices, including specific interests in challenging social constructions and embedded dichotomies within Canadian social policy.

**Kathleen Venema**, an Associate Professor at the University of Winnipeg, has an article on *Tangles: A Story about Alzheimer's, My Mother and Me* forthcoming in a collection on Canadian graphic life narratives. Her own critical memoir explores the ways war, international development, and dementia's devastations have shaped her life and her mother's.

Dr. **Anissa Wardi** is Professor of English at Chatham University and a past contributor to journals such as *African American Review*, *MELUS*, *ISLE* and *University of Toronto Quarterly*. She is the author of *Water and African American Memory: An Ecocritical Perspective* (2011), *Death and the Arc of Mourning in African American Literature* (2003) and co-editor of *African American Literature* (2004), a Penguin Academics anthology.

**Kate Williams** is a Ph.D. candidate of English Literature at the University of Tulsa in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Her dissertation is focused on motherhood in the second-wave feminist literature of Joan Didion, Toni Morrison, Louise Erdrich, and Maxine Hong Kingston and online in mommyblogs and social media.

## Keynote Email Addresses

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## CALL FOR PAPERS

The editorial board is seeking submissions for Vol. 6.1 of the  
*Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement (JMI)*  
to be published in spring/summer 2015

### COMMUNICATING MOTHERHOOD/MOTHERS COMMUNICATING “HIGH CULTURE” TO POP CULTURE TO NEW SOCIAL MEDIA

We welcome submissions from scholars, students, activists, artists, community workers, bloggers, mothers and others who research in this area. Cross-cultural and comparative work is encouraged. We are open to a variety of types of submissions including academic papers from all disciplines and creative submissions including visual art, literature and performance art. This issue will explore the nature, status, representation and experience of mothers and motherhood in various historical, cultural and literary contexts, and examine the many ways in which mothers have been and are affected by, viewed, and/or challenged contemporary cultural norms and dominant ideologies and representations of their role.

#### Topics may include but are not restricted to:

Representations and depictions of mothers/mothering/motherhood in fiction, poetry, drama, art, music, film, advertising, TV facebook, blogs, twitter; investigations into navigating cultural expressions of “good” and “bad” mother/ing; transmitting maternal knowledge(s), parenting skills, mothers/mothering and language, mothers and literacies, feminist motherlines; teaching/learning about mothering/ motherhood through literature, popular culture, celebrity culture, new media; parenting/mothering in literature, art, popular culture, social media, the blogosphere; queer engagements with mothering/motherhood in literature, popular culture and social media; de/constructing embodied understandings of mothering, mother, motherhood; how communication technology permeates the work/home barrier, assists/ challenges relationships and attachment with adopted and biological children; the impact of literature/popular culture/social media on opinions regarding reproduction; mothers’ relationship with “the experts”; expert discourses vs. grassroots communications; transmission of culture and ethnicity through various maternal modalities; mothering in the Information Age; communicating mothers/motherhood across the generations; crossing national borders and class divides through New Social Media; communication and other revolutions (or political organizing), new social media—linking or dividing moms?; low-income and young mothers’ access to and use of New Social Media; cybermothering; mothers/motherhood and Communication Studies; mothers/mothering and education, learning and pedagogy.

#### SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:

Articles should be 15-18 pages (3750 words) including references. All should be in MLA style, WordPerfect or Word and IBM compatible.

Please see our style guide for complete details:

<http://www.motherhoodinitiative.org/journalsubmission.html>

**SUBMISSIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY NOV. 1, 2014!**

**\*\* TO SUBMIT WORK ONE MUST BE A MEMBER OF MIRCI**

<http://www.motherhoodinitiative.org/membership.html>

#### Please direct your submissions to:

Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement (MIRCI)  
140 Holland St. West, PO Box 13022 Bradford, ON, L3Z 2Y5 (905) 775 9089

<http://www.motherhoodinitiative.org> [info@motherhoodinitiative.org](mailto:info@motherhoodinitiative.org)



## CALL FOR PAPERS

The editorial board is seeking submissions for Vol. 6.2 of the  
*Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement (JMI)*  
to be published in fall/winter 2015

### **SUPPORTING AND EMPOWERING MOTHERS IN THE ACADEME: STRATEGIES FOR INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE AND INDIVIDUAL AGENCY**

The issue, "Supporting and Empowering Mothers in the Academe: Strategies for Institutional Change and Individual Agency," will examine the subject of mothers in the academe from scholarly and activist perspectives. It will join scholars that specialize in academic motherhood research with individuals and agencies that support mothers in the academe.

According to recent studies of academic women and mothers, gender discrimination in general, which specifically targets academic mothers, is pervasive in academia. According to a recent Statistics Canada Report, women comprise only 35.6 percent of all tenure track/tenured university faculties in Ontario. In 2009, at Canadian universities, women held only 30.9 percent of tenured positions, but 53.4 percent of non-tenured lecturers were women. The Canadian Association of University Teachers Almanac of Post-Secondary Education 2011/2012 reveals that only 21.8 percent of Full Professors in Canada are women and only 16.3 percent of Tier 1 Canada Research Chairs are held by women. This issue will examine obstacles to and strategies for maternal empowerment in the academe within the context of institutional change and individual agency. The roles that race, class, sexuality, age, ability, religion and ethnicity play in reinforcing/constructing obstacles for the advancement of maternal empowerment and agency in academe, and the structural changes needed to remove them, will be explored.

This issue will draw attention to the experiences of graduate student mothers, and others who are concerned about mentoring graduate students. The main aim of this issue is to deliver models, strategies, and practices of maternal empowerment that are relevant and practical; the activists, service providers, and policy makers who advocate for mothers in academe must be able to utilize them. As reputable public institutions, universities must put family-friendly policies and attitudes into practice that uphold gender equality; this will allow women to balance their academic career paths with the stages of motherhood. Universities stand to tarnish their reputations and lose some of their most talented scholars if they do not.

This issue will generate valuable information on what is needed to support mothers throughout their academic careers, and uphold women's contribution to university culture. We invite submissions for papers from faculty, students, service providers, activists as well as members of faculty unions and associations.

#### **SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:**

Articles should be 15-18 pages (3750 words) including references. All should be in MLA style, WordPerfect or Word and IBM compatible.

Please see our style guide for complete details:

<http://www.motherhoodinitiative.org/journalsubmission.html>

**SUBMISSIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY MAY. 1, 2015!**

**\*\* TO SUBMIT WORK ONE MUST BE A MEMBER OF MIRCI**

<http://www.motherhoodinitiative.org/membership.html>

#### **Please direct your submissions to:**

Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement (MIRCI)  
140 Holland St. West, PO Box 13022 Bradford, ON, L3Z 2Y5 (905) 775-9089  
<http://www.motherhoodinitiative.org> [info@motherhoodinitiative.org](mailto:info@motherhoodinitiative.org)



## CALL FOR PAPERS

The editorial board is seeking submissions for Vol. 7.1 of the *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement (JMI)* to be published in spring/summer 2016

### **MOTHERS, MOTHERING, AND MOTHERHOOD IN LITERATURE (Fiction, Poetry, Drama, Life Writing, Creative Non-Fiction, Social Media)**

In 1976, Adrienne Rich broke new ground with her text *Of Woman Born*, in which she challenged scholars to confront their tendency to avoid discussions of motherhood, observing: “We know more about the air we breathe, the seas we travel, than about the nature and meaning of motherhood.” Rich’s book helped to launch the academic study of mothering in literature, as evidenced by the publication of several key texts: *The Lost Tradition: Mothers and Daughters in Literature* (1980), *Mother Puzzles: Daughters and Mothers in Contemporary American Literature* (1989), *Women’s Fiction Between the Wars: Mothers, Daughters, and Writing* (1998), *This Giving Birth: Pregnancy and Childbirth in American Women’s Writing* (2000), and *Textual Mothers, Maternal Texts* (2010). The aim of this issue is to advance the study of maternal representations in literary texts throughout history, across diverse narrative genres (fiction, poetry, drama, life writing, creative non-fiction, and social media), and from various maternal perspectives (nationality, ethnicity, race, class, ability, sexuality, ability, age, etc.). Papers from a wide range of disciplines and cultural perspectives, both theoretical/scholarly and creative (stories, narrative, creative non-fiction, poetry) are highly encouraged.

#### **SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:**

Articles should be 15-18 pages (3750 words) including references. All should be in MLA style, WordPerfect or Word and IBM compatible.

Please see our style guide for complete details:

<http://www.motherhoodinitiative.org/journalsubmission.html>

**SUBMISSIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY NOV. 1, 2015!**

**\*\* TO SUBMIT WORK ONE MUST BE A MEMBER OF MIRCI**

<http://www.motherhoodinitiative.org/membership.html>

#### **Please direct your submissions to:**

Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement (MIRCI)  
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<http://www.motherhoodinitiative.org> [info@motherhoodinitiative.org](mailto:info@motherhoodinitiative.org)





**CONFERENCE CALL FOR PAPERS**  
Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement (MIRCI)

**MATERNAL SUBJECTIVITIES:  
PSYCHOLOGY/PSYCHOANALYSIS,  
LITERATURE, CULTURE AND THE ARTS**

**Rome, Italy**

**April 23-24, 2015**

**Casa Internazionale delle donne  
Via della Lungara 19 - 00165 Roma  
[www.casainternazionalelledonne.org](http://www.casainternazionalelledonne.org)**

We welcome submissions from scholars, students, artists, mothers and others who research in this area. Cross-cultural and comparative work is encouraged. We are open to a variety of submissions including academic papers from all disciplines and creative submissions including visual art, literature, and performance art.

**Topics may include but are not restricted to:**

Maternal subjectivities in intersectional, global contexts; maternal ambivalence; mothers/mothering in literature; mothers and sons/daughters; representations of the maternal; mother love; psychoanalytic theory on/of mothers; mothers and psychotherapy; counselling approaches specific to mothers; maternal mental health and wellness; psychological processes in becoming a mother; mother's panopticon, attachment to and separation from mother; developmental stages as seen by classic theorists and the constraints of those models; feminist developmental models; feminist critique of the 'psy' discourses in relation to maternal subjectivities; feminist critiques of psychoanalysis/psychology/psychotherapy; mothering as reflexive practice; matroreform, feminist counselling; the social construction of mothers; images of mothers; mother blame/mother guilt; countertransference therapist-mother to client-mother; object relations theory; theories and theorists of maternal subjectivities (Melanie Klein, Helene Deutsch, Karen Horney, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Nancy Chodorow, Jessica Benjamin, Joan Raphael-Leff, Daphne de Marneffe, Lisa Baraitser, Alison Stone); queering/queer maternal subjectivities; 'bad' mothering; feminist/empowered mothering; maternal subjectivities and disabilities; and maternal subjectivities in an historical context.

If you are interested in being considered as a presenter, please send a 200 word abstract and a 50-word bio by December 1, 2014 to [aoreilly@yorku.ca](mailto:aoreilly@yorku.ca)

**\*\* TO SUBMIT AN ABSTRACT FOR THIS CONFERENCE,  
ONE MUST BE A 2015 MEMBER OF MIRCI  
<http://www.motherhoodinitiative.org/membership.html>**

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140 Holland St. West, PO Box 13022, Bradford, ON, L3Z 2Y5 (905) 775-9089  
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