



PALGRAVE STUDIES IN GENDER AND EDUCATION



(Re)birthing the Feminine in Academe

Creating Spaces of Motherhood in
Patriarchal Contexts

Edited by

Linda Henderson · Alison L. Black ·
Susanne Garvis

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Palgrave Studies in Gender and Education

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Preface

This book has emerged from conversations about motherhood and how women are typically positioned within contemporary ‘academe’—a neo-liberal, masculine and patriarchal machine demanding perpetual performance, productivity, competition, efficiency, quantification and sacrifice of body, mind and soul.

Enacting a feminist politics, the researchers in this book engage autoethnographic and creative art-based research methodologies to offer a collection of international and intergenerational narratives which connect expansively with the concept of motherhood in academia and advance original insights into how a more responsive higher education might be conceived and sustained. Across this compendium of research, contemporary and relational ways of understanding ‘motherhood’ are used to draw attention to—and disrupt—the current patriarchal structures defining many women’s lives and work in the academy.

The presented stories serve to shift the focus from typical, traditional patriarchal lenses to champion feminine and feminist perspectives—including diverse knowledges, values, cycles, energies, intuitions and ecologies. Authors use their stories and creative, contemplative, feminist methodologies to speak back to intensified work cultures, damaging

workloads and competitive working conditions that threaten personal and family lives, collegiality, connection, health, well-being and joyful forms of living.

Authors have gathered around them a trusted circle of writers—writers who have sought and are seeking to create new and nourishing academic spaces. Each chapter has been written collaboratively by an author collective. And, within each chapter, authors bear witness to one another, imbuing in their research/writing together research elements that are original, authentic, storied, autoethnographic, responsive, personal and aesthetic. These co-created and evocative assemblages deliberately challenge the norms of research/writing for/in academia. Collectives are researching/writing them-selves-their-bodies-their-feelings-their-lives-their-longings-their-ancestry-their-histories-their-relationships and experimenting with research/writing focused on spacious and relational expressions of being in/outside the academy.

Collectives engage autobiography, collective autoethnography, multi-vocal scripts, narrative and arts-based inquiry, life-history writing, reflection, questioning and journaling. They work with scholarly and found texts, contemplative and poetic methodologies, non-dualistic ontologies, speculative philosophies and material feminisms. Approaches are serious, playful, involving e-correspond (dance), everyday artefacts, artwork, conversation, text and visual exchange.

To readers joining this exploration of an expansive motherhood space, we invite you to listen care-fully. In the spirit of 'Listening to country: A journey of the heart of what it means to belong' by Ros Moriarty, we invite you to lean into 'Dadirri' (www.CreativeSpirits.info). Dadirri is the practice of 'deep listening', 'an almost spiritual skill based on respect' and 'an inner, quiet, still awareness, and waiting'.

As you read, we invite you to find stillness as you wait and listen. You will be exposed to lines and ecologies of M-othering; to ways authors are birthing and bringing forth feminine and/or feminist choices; to how they are responding to mothering bodies in unloving institutions; engaging in writing that is softening and healing injured academic lives; and cultivating new pedagogies in and for higher education. This kind of writing together has, and is, supporting authors to make sense of themselves and their experiences as M-others in and beyond academia.

We hope you are affected by these stories, that they offer up to you an enhanced capacity to understand or empathise, or that they offer you support, reducing feelings of isolation and offering validation of your own experiences and meaning-making efforts.

Two core parts serve as feminist frames for this collection of storied assemblages: *Mothering Bodies and Sensations*; and, *Mothering Relations and Vulnerabilities*. Within each part sit five chapters and a section ‘response’.

The ‘responses’ are a distinguishing feature of the book. For each part, we have invited a senior figure/elder/matriarch from academia to respond to the stories/research/writing of the author collectives in that part. We want to attend to that matriarch’s wisdom, significant knowledge and personal experience about the nature of university life and the value of creating spaces of motherhood in the academy. We also want to hear their thoughts about the value of (re)birthing the feminine through the privileging of personally meaningful methodologies that support deep and collective listening about personal/professional/institutional stories of motherhood/sisterhood/mothering and patriarchal contexts. These wise and thoughtful responses from these experienced academics show how stories enable conversations to continue, how they connect us, challenge us and change us. They affirm that there is value in considering alternatives that are intuitive, authentic, unexpected, soft, creative, expressive, kind, slow, gentle and relational—approaches that honour, hold space for, care for, respect and support genuine connection and relationship. *Thank you, Alison and Laurel, for your rich and generous contributions and insights.*

Part I: Mothering Bodies and Sensations

In the first chapter in the first part of *Mothering Bodies and Sensations*, authors Agnes Bosanquet, Jayde Cahir, Gail Crimmins, Janet Free, Karina Luzia, Lilia Mantai and Ann Werner create a collective autoethnography which explores the messiness and fractured identities of (non) mothers and (non)researchers in and out of academic contexts. Luce Irigaray’s writing on breath, interiority and autonomy brings together

the reflections. Collectively, the stories in this chapter unveil ways of living with and letting go of the demands of academia and the complexities of caring for selves and others.

Sarah Crinall and Anna Vladimirova in Chapter “[Embodied Motherly Research: Re-birthing Sustenance Through the Common \(Im\)material](#)” ask *is motherhood sensation?* Their chapter considers how academia might be and become a nurturing, co-mothering event. While mothering with place, children’s embodying ability to listen and respond to the world is received. Gifts of ordinary matter and immatter—the moon, dots, shearwaters, moths, swan’s call and rhythms of slow—are a connecting thread to the (re)birth of ‘sustenance’. Experimental co-writing events, forming in body-place relations with academic mothering lives at home, are creative, jovial openings that offer academia a glimpse into ‘infinite multiplicat academic motherhood’.

The third chapter explores Louise Gwenneth Phillips, Helen Johnson, Sarah Misra and Agli Zazros-Orr’s experiences of mothering bodies in unloving institutions. Four mothers in academia collaboratively story their lived encounters, bringing differing identities, circumstances and experiences of collective exhaustion. They creatively and vulnerably write lived experiences, sharing these with each other, holding and feeling these lived encounters over time—then, they gift each other with words and imagery, acts of care-full responding. These become multi-vocal biographies of arts-based poetic and visual inquiry which enable each author to see the reflections and diffractions in and across each other’s lived stories. These metaphorically provoke understandings of the pain swept into the unforgiving corners of cold, unloving universities. This work is creative resistance: to write from the body gives pearls of pleasure and joy!

Sandy Farquhar and Justine O’Hara-Gregan in the fourth chapter write about the experience of *mother*, and how it remains with us: familiar smells, textures and sounds, a nostalgic memory of intimacy, the welcome of open arms or perhaps frightening memories of being unsafe. As a physical and emotional presence, the idea of mother impacts the authors deeply, setting up the origins of their interactions with the world and their images of self. The chapter engages in a deep play with mother as metaphor, integrating understandings of aesthetics, geography

and autobiography. The chapter unfolds a meditation and experimentation with thought and body over a four-month period. It draws on an idea of data-seeking-self-seeking-mother, working with scholarly and found texts, as well as yoga and personal journaling, to provide an account of mother within their academic lives. Sandy and Justine explore metaphors of mother as earth, warrior, teacher, shapeshifter and monster which emerge through their various lenses/permutations of self (as postcolonial, post-feminist, pākehā women-academics-teachers-mothers-daughters-yoga practitioners) navigating the male-centric academy. Drawing on non-dualistic ontologies, contemplative methodology, autoethnography and metaphor theory, they explore how they have shaped and informed their perceptions/understandings and enactment of mother and mothering within the academy.

In Chapter “(Re)Claiming Our Soulful Intuitive Lives: Initiating Wildish Energy into the Academy Through Story, Dreaming and Connecting with Mother Earth”, Linda Henderson, Alison L. Black and Prasanna Srinivasan ponder the risk of serving the function of academia’s patriarchal structures. They seek to move beyond exhaustion and lamenting. Together they engage in acts of containment, asserting their intuition and attending to their wild, infinite and instinctual natures. In this chapter, the authors tap into their power as women and engage in writing/not-writing to support their wild, receptive and embodied ways of knowing and sensing. They bundle together their stories and dreaming and engage in processes of calling, bearing witness and responding to each other. This freedom in writing becomes a resource for listening, for ‘doing academia differently’ and for clarifying what is most important to them.

Responding to these chapters, and Part I *Mothering Bodies and Sensations*, Alison Bartlett is drawn to a miasmatic past, remembering her own sensations, exhaustion, raging, longings and languages. She describes her feelings as the chapter stories echo through her body, affecting her for days—bodily, emotionally. Alison connects her understanding of these narratives and these politics of writing to a kind of *lament*, an ancient form of mourning, of sensations. She reminds us to feel; to remember that ‘connections with others is what keeps the world bearable and work sustainable’. She reveals her life experiences of

playing a lament and describes how this is leaking into the workplace, her meaning-making, loss and longing. Concluding, Alison gifts us with a composition, a lamenting lullaby for the drowning tired torn and howling maternal academics and academic mothers in G minor. Our grief, longing and tiredness has now become lamenting sound.

Part II: Mothering Relations and Vulnerabilities

In Chapter “[The Imperceptible Beingness of M/Otherhood in Academia](#)”, the first chapter in the second part *Mothering Relationships and Vulnerabilities*, Anne B. Reinertsen, Bojana Gajic and Louise M. Thomas describe how they experience motherhood and mothering in different ways. They share how they are other while constantly becoming m/other as they write with each other. They are biological mother, donor mother, other mother. In their chapter they write as, for and from their academic selves; write as, for and from their m/other selves.

The authors in Chapter “[Mentoring in the Academy Between Academic Mothers](#)”, Tina Yngvesson, Susanne Garvis and Donna Pendergast, consider the importance of creating circles of care, solidarity and passion. They reflect on the circles of mentoring between them and how these have helped their navigation of the tension-filled spaces in the academy, including traditional and hierarchical norms. Using autoethnographic reflections, they consider the importance of care and compassion that transcends countries, cultures and contexts to provide hope (and solidarity). Together, Tina, Susie and Donna build a shared understanding about what is important in their working lives as academic mothers and what they have learned from each other through mentoring.

The vulnerability of pregnancy is an idea that Liisa Uusimäki and Karmen Johansson write about in Chapter “[The Vulnerability of Pregnancy and the Motherhood Myth](#)”. The intention of their narrative is to share the lived realities and vulnerabilities of pregnancy they have experienced. Their chapter considers the power of the ‘motherhood myth’, how it feels deeply embedded in wider consciousness, and in such a way that associated long-term costs of pregnancy, and motherhood, are often not considered or fully understood by women themselves.

Chapter “Becoming-with as Becoming-Maternal—Writing with Our Children and Companion Species: A Poetic and Visual Autoethnographic Portrayal of Mothering Assemblages” is an arts-based rendering of childhood, mothering and academia as Amy Cutter-Mackenzie-Knowles and Alexandra Lasczik write-with children’s perspectives: Bronte Cutcher, Remy Cutcher, Finley Cutter-Knowles, Lily Cutter-MacKenzie. This chapter explores two positionings of motherhood in the relentless academic machine, foregrounding the perspectives of their children’s experience of mothering in the context of their careers. It is a dialogue with, through and between two academic mothers and their children, aged 28, 26, 10 and 6. The tensions in the public and private lives of mothers in the academy are portrayed in this chapter, tilted to include the experiences of children, as an autoethnographic and arts-based portrayal of each mother-child-companion species assemblage.

The final collectively authored chapter, by authors Catherine Manathunga, Barbara Grant, Frances Kelly, Arwen Raddon and Jisun Jung, argues for the (re)birthing of the academy in ways that would support academic women in their responsibilities for the care of others. These authors explore how these two institutions—the university, and motherhood—have been constructed without reference to women/mothers. The collective fast forward to the present where women and mothers are present within academe. This sets the scene for four vignettes of the kinds of university they—as feminist academics—dream of giving birth to: a university that is more human, more interconnected in time and space, more organic, more family-friendly. By bringing their children and grandchildren into their workspaces, normalising motherhood within academic life and challenging dominant discriminatory practices, Catherine, Barbara, Frances, Arwen and Jisun begin to live this future university.

Our book concludes, as all good books should, with the wisdom and stories of Laurel Richardson. Laurel, focused on the stories connected to Part II *Mothering Relationships and Vulnerabilities*, describes how reading these testimonies connected her to the risk of sharing creative work with an audience, but also served as an invitation to consider her own narrative of her ‘double-time career as *both* mother and academic’. Here, inspired by the lesson given by the author collectives, Laurel provides

not an analytical summary, but the wisdom of her own narrative in the hope that readers will feel heard, understood, supported and connected.

We hope, like Laurel, you will feel these things—understanding, support, connection; and, that as she invites, you will honour your own experiences as you remember (and perhaps write) your own stories and struggles as you read. We believe life in the university can be reimagined through a feminist politics. Our hope is that this book might offer honest provocations and promising possibilities for the ‘rebirthing’ of the academy.

A Thank You to Reviewers

This collection of creative, narrative and arts-based research discusses and is informed by relevant scholarly and theoretical literature and has been subject to editorial scrutiny and a thorough double-blind peer review processes. We would like to thank the reviewers who provided generous (and often extensive) feedback to extend the quality and rigour of author contributions, and who recognised the value of the new and creative knowledge presented, how chapters drew upon, and were grounded in, the work of relevant authorities, theories and theorists, and the importance of contemplative, creative and new methodologies focused on privileging multifaceted stories of experience. Without such assistance and generosity, thoughtful critique and recognition of alternative research processes and products would not be possible, and narrow, limiting and patriarchal ways of doing and thinking about research would prevail. We thank the reviewers for eschewing rigid patriarchal definitions of what comprises meaningful useful research and for valuing creative forms of research that contain aesthetic and evocative descriptions of experience, feelings, stories and meanings.

Clayton, Australia
Sippy Downs, Australia
Gothenburg, Sweden

Linda Henderson
Alison L. Black
Susanne Garvis

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Notes on Contributors

Alison Bartlett is an Associate Professor at The University of Western Australia where she teaches literary studies. She has published widely on Australian literature, feminist memory and cultures of maternity. Her most recent book is *Flirting in the Era of #MeToo: Negotiating Intimacy* with Kyra Clarke and Rob Cover (Palgrave, 2019).

Alison L. Black is an arts-based/narrative researcher in the School of Education, University of the Sunshine Coast. Her research and scholarly work fosters connectedness, community and well-being through contemplative and creative methodologies. She is interested in storied and visual approaches for knowledge construction, representation and meaning-making. She has co-parented four children and been carer for her mother (now deceased) over many decades. She believes her ancestors, grandmother (BLG) and mother walk beside her.

Agnes Bosanquet's research explores questions concerning power relations, discourses and practices of inclusion and exclusion, locations of knowledge and constructions of subjectivity in higher education. She blogs on these ideas, alongside reflections on the experience of raising a child with a chronic illness, and reading dystopian fiction at *The Slow Academic*.

Jayde Cahir has worked in Germany, Scotland, Ireland and Nepal and travelled extensively during this time. She has worked as a barista, a photographer, a teacher and everything in between. This chequered career steered her in the direction of how people communicate. She then completed a Ph.D. in this topic. She shares her enthusiasm for lifelong learning with her husband, and they actively foster a sense of curiosity for all things in their young son.

Gail Crimmins is a feminist academic in the School of Communication and Creative Industries at the University of the Sunshine Coast. She works with arts-informed and feminist research methodologies to unearth and re-present the narratives and voice of various marginalised groups. She presents her research using both traditional and non-traditional forms of research communication including performance, film, creative writing and traditional academic discourse. As an autoethnographer, she also uses accounts of socio-economic poverty, working-class political activism and the lived experience of casualised academia as social commentary to inform Higher Education policy.

Sarah Crinall lives on Phillip Island, Australia, writing on everyday sustenance from the spaces of a mothering day. Where human nature and other nature form lively ecosystems, Sarah theorises with her children, husband Paul, water, nests, and more, in artful collaborations to create research beyond qualitative modes with a new material feminism.

Bronte Cutcher is a secondary special educator, currently working at Ormeau Hills State High School on the Gold Coast, with qualifications in psychology and education. Although her specialisation is mathematics, she is an artist at heart and works creatively through painting, drawing, photography and design. Bronte has travelled extensively and is particularly inspired by culture, spirituality, music and animals.

Remy Cutcher is an intensive care nurse of 8 years' experience Australia-wide. She currently works at a Gold Coast Hospital in ICU. Remy is also a visual artist and photographer, whose work is inspired by her broad and frequent international travel. Remy is a seeker of travel adventures, and she has a deep love of nature, most particularly the ocean and mountains.

Finley Cutter-Knowles is 7 years old and is a year 2 student at Silkwood School, Gold Coast, Australia. Finley loves being loud, break dancing and playing with technology. He loves his family and being with Winky (dog), Louey (budgie), Poh (cat), Damo (cat), Midnight (cat), Clive (guinea pig), Barry (guinea pig) and Google (recently deceased goldfish).

Lily Cutter-Mackenzie is 11 years old and is a year 6 student at Silkwood School, Gold Coast, Australia. She is passionate about animals and loves to make Art. Lily enjoys being with her companion animals, namely OneFeather (brushturkey), Sticky Beak (brushturkey), Poh (cat), Damo (cat), Midnight (cat), Winky (god), Speckles (recently deceased goldfish), Stevie Wonder (goldfish), Barry (guinea pig), Clive (guinea pig), Louey (budgie) and the Bees.

Amy Cutter-Mackenzie-Knowles is Professor of Sustainability, Environment and Education at Southern Cross University. She is the Deputy Head of School Research and HDR Training for the School of Education, as well as the Research Leader of the Sustainability, Environment and the Arts Education (SEAE) Research Cluster. She has led over 30 research projects in environmental education largely centred on ontologies in/as nature through socioecological and more recently posthumanist theoretical orientations.

Sandy Farquhar is a Senior Lecturer at The University of Auckland. Her research and teaching interests are in early childhood philosophy, policy and embodied pedagogy. She is particularly interested in teachers' work and well-being where she uses narrative and phenomenological methods to explore teachers' lived experiences.

Janet Free taught Drama and Performance at UK colleges and universities from 1986 to 2006. Her research practice in shiatsu, reflexology, Alexander technique and yoga led to her co-authoring *Holistic Bodywork for Performers* with Nicky Ramsay in 2004. In 2006, Janet's academic career was exchanged for the life-changing role of therapeutic parenting to three adopted siblings scarred by developmental trauma. She currently uses drama to nurture bodies locked in fight/flight impulses, and her research has become me-search.

Bojana Gajic is Associate Professor in the Department of Electronic Systems at Norwegian University of Science and Technology. She is preoccupied with designing new spaces and materials for exploratory, inquiry-based, conceptual learning in the field of science, technology and mathematics, across the educational level borders.

Susanne Garvis is a Professor of child and youth studies at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. Her publications include narrative methodology and research with young children, teachers and families. She has completed multiple funded research grants, government consultancies and worked for philanthropy organisations.

Barbara Grant (University of Auckland) researches and writes in the field of critical university studies, with a particular interest in doctoral education and supervision of graduate, academic work and identities and activism within the university. She has also published on research methodologies for education and the social sciences, and academic writing.

Linda Henderson is a Senior Lecturer and feminist researcher in the Faculty of Education, Monash University. Her work draws on post-structural and posthumanist ideas, methodologies and practices. Through her work, she aims to foster connectedness with all living matter in an effort to create a world that values connectedness, heterogeneity and multiplicity. Her work includes poetry, narrative and creativity with the aim of generating new imaginaries for education and society.

Karmen Johansson, Ph.D. is Croatian/Swedish and a Senior Lecturer in didactics in the Department of Education and Special Education at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. She teaches in primary and secondary teacher education programmes. Her interests are: second and foreign language learning, CLIL, vocabulary acquisition, communication and bridging classroom discourses.

Helen Johnson's research centres around artistic communities and creative interventions. She is particularly interested in the intersections between arts-based research, participatory research and social justice. She is also a spoken word poet and events' organiser. Helen juggles these interests with caring for her four-year-old son, alongside her wife Benita.

Jisun Jung is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Hong Kong. She received a Ph.D. from Seoul National University, Korea, in 2011. Her current research focuses on the academic profession, doctoral education and the learning experiences and employability of master's students.

Frances Kelly is a Senior Lecturer in Critical Studies in Education at the University of Auckland. Her research interests are primarily higher education and history of education. She is currently researching ways that connection to place is cultivated in educational settings.

Alexandra Lasczik (formerly Cutcher), is Associate Professor, Arts and Education in the School of Education, Southern Cross University. She is currently Deputy Leader of the Sustainability, Environment and the Arts in Education Research Cluster [SEAE]. Alexandra's recent work explores movement, specifically walking as pedagogy, and arts-based research.

Karina Luzia is a human geographer and social researcher who has had over forty jobs in Australian universities in the last decade, spanning nine disciplines. Her Ph.D. explored the geographies of same-sex parenting, her honours thesis, Chicana borderlands literature. She is co-founder of CASA, a blog for Casual, Adjunct, Sessional staff and Allies in higher education. Recently, she has been thinking about her higher education work futures and, specifically, about who works in the margins of Australian academia, how they got there, whether they can move to centre and whether they even need to.

Catherine Manathunga is a Professor of Education Research in the School of Education at the University of the Sunshine Coast (USC), Australia. She is the co-leader of the USC Transcultural and Indigenous Pedagogies Research Group. She is an historian who draws together expertise in historical, sociological and cultural studies research to bring an innovative perspective to higher education research. She has current research projects on doctoral education, academic identities and the history of universities in Ireland, Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

Lilia Mantai's Ph.D. focused on social support and researcher identity development of doctoral students in Australia. Her research experience and interests in higher education concern specifically doctoral

education, early career research support, research-based learning, academic identities, learning and teaching, and educational technologies. She grew up in Kazakhstan and Russia, spent her school and university years in Germany and is now raising a trilingual child in Sydney, Australia with her academic husband, who was born in Central America and attended school and university in the USA. They regularly travel around the world to see their families.

Sarah Misra is a Senior Lecturer and mother of two. Her research is primarily focused around developing more creative and inclusive methods of research (such as the award-winning Plastic Ceiling Project) and feminist issues of social justice especially barriers facing working mothers, well-being of mothers and mothers and spirituality.

Justine O'Hara-Gregan is a Professional Teaching Fellow in early childhood initial teacher education at The University of Auckland. She is also mother to four delightful human beings who have grown with her on her university journey. Her research and teaching interests are in authenticity, holistic well-being and relationships.

Donna Pendergast is Dean and Head of the School of Education and Professional Studies at Griffith University, Australia. Her expertise is early and middle years education, student engagement, teacher efficacy, school reform and teacher education. She is presently Chairperson of the Board of Directors of Queensland Education Leadership Institute (QELI).

Louise Gwenneth Phillips is an Associate Professor of Education at James Cook University, Singapore. She is (separated and re-partnered) mother to three mixed-race sons. Her career spans early childhood education, storytelling, children's rights and citizenship research, and arts-based research methodologies. She is particularly interested in story as theory and method and is a Board Director for the Gallery of Children's Art.

Arwen Raddon now works part-time as a postgraduate tutor for distance learners, after 16 years working as an academic, researcher and later project manager. She re-trained to become a yoga and meditation teacher and to give Reiki, sound and crystal healing, and is enjoying a different pace of life in rural Devon.

Anne B. Reinertsen is a Professor in Education at Østfold University College, Halden, Norway. She is preoccupied with concrete and speculative philosophy, subjective professionalism and new material qualitative research methodologies.

Laurel Richardson is a Distinguished Emeritus Professor of Sociology at The Ohio State University. She has been honoured with life-time achievement awards for her writing, mentoring, teaching and community outreach. Her two most recent books are *Lone Twin: A True Story of Loss and Found* (Brill) and *Seven Minutes from Home: An American Daughter's Story* (Sense). Most days she walks her Papillons, writes, quilts and walks her dogs some more.

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Mothering Bodies and Sensations



Breathing Room

Agnes Bosanquet, Jayde Cahir, Gail Crimmins,
Janet Free, Karina Luzia, Lilia Mantai and Ann Werner

Introduction

This chapter tells stories about living with and letting go of academia and motherhood. It presents a form of “narrative inquiry” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) that articulates the “messiness” and multiple layers of academic practice and affect (Jones, 2011). Specifically, we offer a collective autoethnography of seven researcher-constructed narratives by women academics, university professional staff and ex-academics in three countries. Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2011) describe autoethnography as focusing on “epiphanies” or “remembered moments perceived

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to have significantly impacted the trajectory of a person's life ... times of existential crisis that forced a person to attend to and analyse lived experience ... and events after which life does not seem quite the same" (n.p.). Our collective autoethnographies are more everyday, but no less life-changing. Illustrating the complex and conflicting identities as "academic" and "mother", we reflect on our contexts and identities as (non) researchers, (non)academics, (non)writers and (non)mothers.

One of the complexities of collective autoethnography is the emergence of multiple subjectivities in the text. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) write: "*The 'I' can speak as [many]. Yet in living the [research] process, we are one person. We are also one in the writing*" (p. 9). The use of multiple first-person accounts here draws attention to the diverse identities and experiences of the authors. We are also thankful for the anonymity this provides as the narratives refer to children, partners, parents, friends and colleagues. This multiplicity demonstrates a critical feminist perspective, which understands subjectivity as constructed in relation to others and the world. For feminist poststructuralist theorists, such as Irigaray and Butler whose work we read in this chapter, subjectivity is gendered, intersects with other markers of identity, and is enmeshed in complex and unequal structures of discourse and power. We are within complex social, cultural, economic and political systems, in which we grapple with the challenges of caring for ourselves and others, and being cared for by others. We breathe the same air.

Breathing in Theory

Judith Butler and Luce Irigaray make uneasy bedfellows, but much is gained by reading them alongside one another. Judith Butler's *Gender*

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Trouble (1990) has been influential in challenging conceptions of sex, gender and sexuality; Luce Irigaray is best known for *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1985), a critique of the gendered structures of philosophy, psychoanalysis and economics. Butler challenges the assumed practice within feminism of grounding theory in the “sexed specificity of the female body” (1993, p. 4), something Irigaray is known for. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler (1990) argues that gender is not a bodily given but is socially and culturally constituted through the “repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts ... that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” (p. 33). The gendered self is an illusion, a regulatory fiction and a strategy for survival that is reinforced through repetitive relational practices. Butler acknowledges that the “largeness and speculative character of Irigaray’s claims have always put me a bit on edge” but “confesses” that she “can think of no feminist who has read and reread the history of philosophy with the kind of detailed and critical attention she has” (1993, p. 11).

In “The Age of Breath”, Luce Irigaray (2004) writes that breathing corresponds with interiority and autonomy; a woman who is attentive to her breath gives weight to her subjectivity and spirituality: “To cultivate the divine in herself, the woman, in my opinion, has to attend to her own breathing, her own breath, even more than to love” (2004, p. 165). In the collection *Breathing with Luce Irigaray* (Škof & Holmes, 2013), scholars explore the possibilities of Irigaray’s “age of breath” as an embodied practice of intersubjectivity, or collective awareness of the needs of others. Irigaray’s writing on breath assumes a familiarity with the practices of yoga. In *Between East and West*, she outlines what yoga has taught her—“the importance of breathing in order to survive, to cure certain ills, and to attain detachment and autonomy” (p. 10). Something she did not find in yoga was “a sexuation of breathing”, which she has explored “by practicing, by listening (to myself), by reading, by awakening myself” (2002, p. 10). Exploring what it means to be a *woman* breathing is something Butler might describe as an example of “girling”, a process of perceiving and imposing differences between men and women with the illusion of “naturalness” (1993, p. 177). Read alongside Butler’s criticism, we find value in Irigaray’s work for the ways it enables us to think about the complex

“naturalness” of breathing, and how breathing connects our subjectivity and our relationships with others and the world. Butler (1993) advocates finding ways to use the term “woman” tactically “even as one is ... used and positioned by it” (p. 29).

There is a link between Butler and Irigaray on breath, as noted in *Breathing with Irigaray* (2013). Butler writes about breath in relation to poems written by prisoners in Guantanamo:

What I sense in these poems from Guantanamo is the simple, almost primeval, arithmetic of breathing in and out. The origin of life, and the origin of language and the origin of poetry are all there, in the first breath, each breath as if it were our first, the anima, the spirit, what we inspire, what we expire, what separates us from extinction, minute after minute, what keeps us alive as we inhale and exhale the universe. (cited in Škof & Holmes, 2013)

Breath is what keeps us alive. Like Butler’s use of the term “spirit”, Irigaray describes breath as the “vehicle of the soul” (2004, p. 167). We wrote the narratives that follow in response to a prompt to think about “breathing room” through everyday artefacts, which ignited reflection on the collision/union/intersubjectivity of our (non)mother and (non)academic writing and researching selves.

Breath I

It is Friday afternoon. Fridays are the days I set aside for writing, reading, thinking. Activities (I believe) that being in academia should be about, things that make me a person as well as an academic, partly strategy and partly desire. All week has been consumed by teaching and meetings, administration, emails and colleagues complaining for hours on the phone. I use the capitalist metaphor consumed, because that is how I feel, like I am being chewed up by my university. I am head of department so I can’t hang up when colleagues complain. Or am I just too polite? But now it is Friday afternoon and I am writing and thinking. An embodied pleasure.

I write memory notes on post-its, often the boring yellow squares, and sometimes on other post-its shaped like leaves or pink exclamation marks. I stick them to different things: my computer, my calendar, my purse, the book I am reading; creating a materialised stylisation of myself as an academic and a mother, a caring feminine subject. They often have lists on them, they could be for shopping, or revisions for an article, a reminder to ring the hospital, organise a birthday party for my daughter. Remember to book classrooms for next semester.

I have a cup of coffee next to me. I always drank coffee as a social thing—until I had a baby, well I didn't actually give birth to a baby, but my partner did and then we both had a beautiful baby and it changed how I could act and speak in the world. It changed me as subject. Since then I have been addicted to coffee because I never get enough sleep. Before my daughter came it happened that I sometimes could not sleep, because of work pressure, stress or worry. I have been cured of my sleeping problems. And I often keep a cup of coffee close by.

Today I have a good feeling about my work. This is what I want to do. Also, I have to be at preschool to pick up my daughter between 3.30 and 4. I want to pick her up; I miss her since I have spent a lot of time at work this week. I can feel the frustration growing within me as the day moves on—this is not how it was supposed to be, I have an article to write, I have a keynote to think about, and I want to have a glass of wine on this Friday night. The sound effect for new emails keeps going off. Fridays start out full of hope, I am imagining time to write, time to pick up my child early, time to reflect on strategies and methods, have lunch with my partner. Usually not much comes of it.

Breath II

I graduated with a Ph.D. in 2017. My “research training” involved asking critical questions, especially the less obvious ones, being thorough in one's quest for information and its interpretation, paying attention to language and choosing each word to put down on paper carefully. My gaze was turned inwards. English was the third language I learned after Russian and German, so expressing my ideas academically is still

a task in itself. I enjoy the constant word wrangling and never-ending search for polished ideas and nearly perfect sentences in order to express my ideas. Post-Ph.D., I write for academic publications, but also social media, and my parenting and self-development journal.

My 3.5-year old constantly seeks attention, competing with my other roles: wife, friend, early career academic, good person. If in doubt, he will always win, although everyday juggles of work and life are not so clean-cut.

In August 2015, I received an email response from a journal about my first academic paper submission. I was breastfeeding my 3-month old. He took a long time to settle. I had little time to think about my Ph.D., to think about anything other than feeds, nappies, sleep, caring for myself and my marriage. I rushed through the email quickly. Revise and Resubmit. My heart skipped a beat. I decided to read the detailed comments for revision when he was asleep. As I rocked him I sat down at the dining table—my home office—and opened my laptop. Shiny and flat, my laptop became a visual indicator in the small apartment to signal mummy-is-at-work vs mummy-is-free-to-play. It would move onto the sideboard when my baby was up or his daddy home, it wandered onto the dining table when it was me-time. A big glass of water next to me (I was always so thirsty, forgetting to drink enough). I took a deep breath, my heart again racing and fear flooding me: What if they ask for too much? What if something foundational is wrong and I can't fix it in the time left? The revision was not a big deal. I could do it, now, with him in my arm I got right to it. Phew. I remembered to breathe.

I reminded myself again as mother's guilt was a constant companion: my baby was part of my Ph.D. plan. Now, in a new academic job, I am still learning to keep this guilt at bay. I'm getting better. Sometimes it overwhelms me. I practise yoga and mindfulness more seriously now, as if my sanity depends on it. It does. I run. It teaches me to breathe through stress and anxiety. I practise gratitude; I exercise self-compassion. I tell myself to let go and accept I can't have it all at once. I write to process this whirlwind of emotions, and I talk with my son about what gives me joy and keeps me away from him:

My (almost) 3.5-year old sees a pen on the dining table and goes: *Who's drawing, Mummy?* I pause and seize the opportunity to invite him into my world, I wonder if he's ready to understand.

Me: *Me, Mummy's been writing.*

He: *Why?*

Me: *Mummy writes down ideas.*

He: *Why?*

Me: *That's Mummy's job, she thinks, she writes and ...* I pause here looking for words to simplify what I do. I pause for too long, it's complicated.

He: *Yesterday, I saw a lion, and he didn't bite me.*

I smile at him and at my husband across the table. I readily forget about my world and enter his. I breathe out. We talk about good and bad lions, and we roar. In such moments breathing transitions me from my academic world and living in my head to my motherhood world where I can just be. I am more aware of such transitions now, and I feel I am kinder to myself and others like me who live motherhood, womanhood and academia every day.

Breath III

A few years ago, it occurred to me that when it came to parenting, I was in a position of considerable privilege, in that I could more or less choose if and when to parent. While my having children wasn't necessarily 'expected', my general situation seemed optimal: an inner-suburban, middle-class, tertiary-educated, female resident of a cosmopolitan city in a prosperous Western culture, where people have a relatively wide range of options when it comes to parenting. A long-term stable relationship, owning a home, two regular incomes, a supportive extended community meant a tick in many of the boxes on my imaginary list of desirable traits for Successful Parenting Today.

This is the first paragraph verbatim of my second research article, published during a Ph.D. on the geographies of same-sex parenting. I see the front page of this paper every time I sit at my desk at home, as it is framed (like my Ph.D. testamur) and on a wall, unlike my Ph.D. testamur (which is... I don't really know where. At some stage, it fell off

the wall and I slid it onto a shelf somewhere, where it still sits. The evidence that I am published is framed, remains visible, my qualification as academic also framed but tucked away somewhere, unseen).

The paragraph still works, more or less, to locate me, indicating Where I Am Now, at least geographically and culturally, and it also indicates Where—and What—I Am Not, eight years later. I am still in the same house, same living situation. I am still a researcher, now with a Ph.D., and still, apparently, the sort of person who writes her way through personal issues in academic papers.

I Am Not many of the things I imagined when I wrote that piece. By now, I imagined I would be a parent and an academic. I am neither, at least not in the way I thought.

I Am Not a parent and the ability to have my own (biological) children is no longer there. But after I started writing the article in 2007, two small children came to live with us, along with their still-a-child biological parent. They stayed for two years, transforming our household into almost-but-not-quite a nuclear family, giving insight into having dependent-but-demanding, small-but-tough humans share your home. I love/d these children and I care/d for them, but I realised parenting was and is not for me. To be blunt, I need more space than I have—emotionally, mentally and physically—to parent full-time, long-term.

I Am Not an academic—at least I am not employed as one. In my many university roles, I do academic-ky things: until fairly recently, for example, I was teaching. I write and review academic papers, I read and research. I sit on committees and working groups. But even if I got through the incredibly competitive application process to be employed as academic—and just the thought makes my chest constrict—I suspect I would find the ongoing performance requirements, the publish-on-demand, the having-to-spend-big in the prestige economy that is academia, suffocating. I need more time-space, mind-space, than I believe would be permitted in any academic position I see advertised. I want to breathe normally, deeply, when at work with the space to pause, reflect, think, read, and write.

I need more space to be scholarly than is allowed in modern-day academia.

Breath IV

When my partner was hospitalised, I began to see my life differently. I realised I would not be able to commit to research and writing because the work is unpaid. We are a single-income family living off a part-time wage. The decision not to write journal articles in my “free” time is not conducive to finding an academic job. I have let it go. I am content to be employed as a non-academic at a university in a role that uses my experience. If I teach as a casual academic, the work is in addition to my non-academic role.

Statements like “I am a researcher” or “I am an academic” categorise who we are for others. I rarely label myself as either. My Ph.D. is something I did, rather than who I am. Instead, I am a wife and I am a mother and, like many, I spend every day juggling these roles alongside paid work.

I use my skills to research my partner’s illness and our son’s development. I have a fear that I may miss initial warning signs and the opportunity for early intervention. Recent research shows how everyday demonstrations such as writing a letter can influence children’s interest in the usefulness of the alphabet and literacy more generally. I rarely send letters, so during my partner’s second hospitalisation, I decided to write a journal with our son. Not just a practical application of writing, but a record so that my partner could eventually read it.

Writing in my son’s journal is part of our bedtime routine. Listening to him recount the day is a gateway to his inner world. Sometimes funny anecdotes: “I held a chicken but not a rooster because they are too tricky” was his summary of our visit to our local nursery. Often our son recounts what he has eaten “We ate ice cream, it was chocolate from out of Mars” to describe ice cream with Mars Bar sprinkled through it. Sometimes he holds a mirror up to me: “Mummy doesn’t play with me a lot or often”. I know that it is true. I write it down. I take a deep breath.

He knows by my breathing that I felt the meaning of the words. He says “Mummy sang me a song. Sweet Honey Bee”. I started singing on the way home from our daily hospital visit. He was restless, tired from all the time spent rushing around. I sang: “If I was a flower growing

wild and free, All I'd want is you to be my sweet honey bee". My chest is tight and the words seem strained as I try and breathe before the next line. When the song had finished, our son said "Again". We sang the song again. My breath was a little freer, my body not so tight. I was breathless at the end but some of the weight on my chest had been released.

Breath V

I lost my voice. I couldn't speak for eight weeks. The consultant said it was a paralysed vocal chord. The singing teacher who helped me recover said that I couldn't speak because I'd stopped breathing properly. As if going into battle, I was anticipating my struggle with parenting by taking huge gulps of air and holding on for dear life. I was flooding the engine. I needed to sip the air: constantly refuel. I know all about this stuff. For many years, I taught drama students how to breathe. I ran undergraduate courses with titles like *Body, Breath and Relaxation*. I practised the Alexander Technique and even co-wrote a book on holistic approaches to performance. Yet I could not breathe. Motherhood was suffocating me.

I gave up my academic career when I adopted three children. Their developmental trauma and attachment issues mean I have to support their upbringing with weekly therapies for speech, OT, sensory development, dyslexia, dyspraxia and psychotherapy.

As a professional lecturer, I never had to work this hard: the unrelenting hours, the research, the preparation. In my workplace, there was always a sense of completion and achievement as each term passed, with exams fulfilled and papers written. But now I learn to embrace the incomplete, the chaotic. My struggle as a mother is to keep breathing.

In addition to her attachment issues my youngest child, aged 9, has ADHD. She dances, cartwheels, sings, shouts, has meltdowns and sprints her way through the world, mostly smiling and carefree, but sometimes raging, oppositional and frustrated. In those moments, her screams are piercing and her anger mostly directed towards herself, tearing at her skin to soothe her body on fire, punching the face that she

detests. Her need for attention is insatiable. She stalks me around the house, constantly needing an audience. She is before me now, ferociously itching and scratching her scalp as the nits that have chased around her classmates have landed on her head. She presents me with a vicious spiked weapon, the nit comb, and snuggles into the familiar cushion of my lap to be attended upon. The ritual of the egg search is such a bonding moment; for centuries mothers have cradled their children picking through their scalps. The ritual of purging is detailed, time-consuming, painstaking, involving the most intimate of touch. I am reminded of an immersive theatre production I once attended where a solo artist created a one-on-one bathing experience. It was an experiential rather than a spectatorial event, that aimed to provide a space for intimacy and nurture. It had a profound effect on my body memory tapping into primal senses, which connected with my being held as a child. Stroking rigid steel needles through soft blond hair I am creating my own therapeutic and sacred bonding. What starts as a chore becomes a shared moment, charged with intense feelings of love and protection. She is still and present. We are both breathing.

Breath VI

Before starting to write, I listen to a five-minute guided meditation for academics from Kimine Mayuzumi's blog *Being Lazy and Slowing Down*. "This is a short meditation to gently inspire your inner writing spirit ... Remind yourself of the now moment of writing, rather than the future with unknown outcomes ... Keep your back straight, close your eyes. Take a deep breath". I take a deep breath of the air of my office. It's on the top floor of a 1970s concrete building. The walls are pale apricot, painted in the 1980s, but the view is spectacular. I keep the windows open, just a crack so the birds don't enter. The north-westerly wind blows from the remnant of turpentine ironbark forest at the edge of campus. The air is sweet and warm.

I call myself a slow academic, tactically, but it feels as though slow academia chose me. Twelve years ago, when I was a Ph.D. candidate and a casual lecturer, my daughter was born. As a result of

placental abruption during birth, she had insufficient oxygen for a time. I often think: I was meant to be breathing for her. After repeated life-threatening seizures, she was diagnosed with epilepsy at the age of two. Last year, her seizures worsened with the onset of puberty (“Mum, don’t say that word”). She was unable to attend school for half the year and required lengthy hospitalisations. Identifying as a slow academic helped: a definition to counter relentless outputs, metrics, impact. Always falling short. Calling myself a slow academic reminds me I am not in the same race as other academics. But I am slow in company: writing creatively, making connections, finding pleasure in work, caring for myself and others, and engaging in small acts of resistance.

My daughter is on a school camp for five days. This time last year she was having thirty to forty seizures a day, lasting up to twenty minutes each. I could do nothing but sit with her, on her side in the recovery position, and make sure she kept breathing. Inhale and exhale, minute after minute. While she was sick, we visited Australia’s National Art Gallery and saw an exhibition entitled *The Breathing Room* by Patricia Piccinini. An audiovisual space of multiple screens, it was like entering the insides or watching a close-up of a strange fleshy creature breathing. Sometimes the creature panicked and its breathing escalated. Sometimes it slowed like it was sleeping. The room was both comforting and disturbing in its intimacy. A bit like being and having a mother, I thought.

My daughter is currently taking five medications to keep the seizures well controlled. For camp, we have had the medications measured out and packed at the pharmacist. Her dosage requires one small tablet to be cut into quarters. The pharmacist has done this with a precision that rarely happens at home. It’s an A4 size blister pack with tablets in individually sealed compartments, marking morning, evening and bedtime. The packet promises “peace of mind for relatives, carers and loved ones”.

This morning, her five-year-old brother cried when we waved off the busload of excited children. It was difficult to let her go. Tonight, her father and I will try not to show each other the whites of our eyes. We will hold our worries close and practise the art of distraction. At camp, she will be kayaking, swimming, rock climbing and tackling high ropes courses. I control what I can right now: my breath, this moment. I keep

my back straight, pace my breaths, inhale and exhale. I remind myself to take a walk at lunchtime and notice the wild and quiet and neglected places that remain in the university. The places that keep me alive.

Breath VII

I've moved office three times this year. First a demountable; in the wet season gumboots couldn't protect me. I dragged my muddy, sodden body across campus. Second I "office-sat" for a colleague on sabbatical. Finally, I moved to an "office of my own" in a corridor clothed in NTEU stickers, Women's International Day posters and Aboriginal flags. Here, I can breathe, surrounded by people who share my life-blood to be activist in academia, human and more-than-human in and through our academic roles. I unpack my boxes.

The first object I display is a picture of myself and my son. He's wearing his Prep uniform (his gold shirt-collar tells the rest of the school that this child needs kindness, might be(come) homesick...) When the photo was taken, I walked Will into class and put his lunchbox and drink cup into his little tray. Both objects had WILL O written across in permanent marker—the O vital as there were three Williams in his class. Five years on, he's still Will-O. I remember kissing him good-bye, rushing, always rushing (for work) when the teacher's aide asked if she could take a photograph. I smile and say "of course" but inside heat rises. I'm panicking. *I'll be late for work, and I can't be late again* ... My face is flush with fear as I adopt my mother-role. I stylise my body to hold my son close and smile to the camera. Several weeks later the photo comes home in a pillar-box red frame decorated with pasta spirals. I smile and remember—with guilt—the day it was taken. I had performed my role well; we are mother and son in embrace.

The second object I place on my bookshelf is a photograph of my parents holding me on my Christening day. My mum with short black hair, wearing a peacock-blue suit, young and beautiful. She's 21 and already a mother of two. My dad wears a suit and a skinny-tie. I'm wearing a traditional Christening gown and bonnet. The image captures the first day my mum had left the house since delivering me on

a stormy autumn night in 1970. In Catholic tradition, mother and newborn remained at home until the baptism.

Mum and Dad met when she was 18, he 24, became pregnant and married months later. A pattern I emulated, though I was 36 and my husband 31. We laugh at our “shot-gun” wedding narratives. Squeezing our blossoming bodies into dresses that fitted easily a few weeks previously. I often place my feet in the imprints she has laid down. When I rise at 3 a.m. to work, I stride with my mother. She woke between two and three every morning to clean schools, hospitals or offices before dashing home for dad’s 6 a.m. shift. He put in “doublers” (back to back shifts from 6 a.m.–2 p.m. and 2–10 p.m. down hot, asbestos-lined furnaces) to pay the mortgage on our “two up two down” terrace. They worked hard, and fought for the rights of women, for free education and healthcare, to protect working conditions and wages, for nuclear disarmament, against apartheid... They marched streets, held placards, raised money, door-knocked with petitions, wore badges. Our house was headquarters for many campaigns.

Side by side in solidarity. We three share breath and recognise our bond, privilege and responsibility to make places we live and work fairer, kinder and more just.

These are just two of the objects that inhabit a piece of the story of who I am as a mother, daughter, academic. I stand in the footprints of my mother, I press my cheek against that of my son. I feel allied to my mother, my academic neighbours and my children. I stand on the shoulders of the women who have gone before to afford me this room, the physical and metaphorical space, a room of my own, D1.51. And I stand with the mothers who rush through child/mother rituals barely breathing, trying to cohabit a space of mother academic, or academic mother. I gravitate to this room, these people, I am inspired, I aspire and expire the breath of my family.

Breathing Together

We have written ourselves in these narratives. We have also written about others, including children. The academy can demand precedence over our time, space and comfort, but also that of our loved

ones. Our experiences of both motherhood and academia are different from what we imagined: “This is not how it was supposed to be” describes a distracted writing day, but can also apply to the gap between our imagined visions of motherhood and academia, and the complex realities of precarious work, health issues and changing conceptions of success. As Kamler and Thomson (2007) illustrate in relation to doctoral experience, academic writing is both text work and identity work; as the research is written, so is the researcher. The autoethnographies focus on artefacts from everyday life that illustrate these identities. These include: a framed first page of a journal article on the wall, post-it notes next to a cup of coffee, conversations with children about writing, a shared daily journal, a nit comb, medications and photographs.

In our collective autoethnographies, breath and breathing mean different things. We share a yearning for more space—for breathing room. Attuned to the needs of others, we forget to breathe or to drink enough water. We lose our voices. We never get enough sleep. We push our own life support aside in response to academia, or children, or both. We befriend coffee and a Friday night glass of wine. Breathing is a necessity, a means of survival, but also represents the practice of self-care. Writing about academia and motherhood, our chests constrict, we are chewed up. We feel frustrated, guilty and panicky. We are suffocating and falling short. In her epilogue to *A Burst of Light*, Lorde speaks of the self-care as radical, not self-indulgence but self-preservation and an act of political warfare (Lorde, 1988). Breathing needs space and time to flow, nourish and fuel us. We have to be reminded to slow down, to sip the air, and to consciously still our presence, to attend to our own breath, to cultivate the divine in ourselves (Irigaray, 2004). We find joy in these moments. We have conversations with children, we hold, we sing, we find like-minded souls, we advocate for change, and we write.

Breathing represents much-needed autonomy and freedom from the challenges of academic work in the individualistic, metric-driven, performance-based context of contemporary universities, which disproportionately impacts women (Bosanquet, 2017). We stylise ourselves along of continuum of academic and (non)academic selves in a

series of performative acts. This is seen in the language we use to define ourselves in relation to academia: my Ph.D. is something I did, rather than who I am; I am a slow academic: I Am Not an academic; writing, reading, thinking are things that make me a person as well as an academic. Our stylisations can be seen in the tasks we relate to our work: writing; teaching, meetings, administration, emails and phone calls with colleagues; teaching, writing and reviewing academic papers, reading and research, sitting on committees and working groups. In a Butlerian sense, these performative acts establish the illusion of a stable identity.

We also perform repetitive acts of motherhood and are stylised (by ourselves and others) as caring feminine subjects. We smile for photographs, organise birthday parties, manage appointments and medications, care for bodies and delouse hair, record words and have conversations about lions, hold our children close and wave goodbye. We have let go of things and selves: becoming a mother, having it all, being a researcher, finding a sense of completion and accomplishment and having an academic career. We take one breath at a time, write one word at a time, place one foot in front of the other and redefine our identities by the hour. We are always, as Butler puts it, “terms in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end” (1990, p. 33).

Our narratives recognise a multiplicity of positions and performances: (non)researchers, (non)academics, (non)writers and (non)mothers. Like Butler and Irigaray, motherhood and academia are uneasy bedfellows. Reading these theorists together, and writing about our painful and joyful experiences of academia and motherhood, showcases our uneasiness and messiness, both theoretically, textually and as lived experience. We remain hopeful and affirm our agency: we write, we celebrate our achievements, we enjoy ourselves, we bond, and we breathe. As Irigaray puts it: “To construct and inhabit our airy space is essential. It is the space of bodily autonomy, of free breath, of free speech and song, of performing on the stage of life” (1993, p. 66).

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Embodied Motherly Research: Re-birthing Sustenance Through the Common (Im)material

Sarah Crinall and Anna Vladimirova

Preface

This chapter is a creative piece made from words, letters and images exchanged. We¹ two mother-researchers craft our correspondence into a pondering on sustenance and academia with feminist philosophy, while living in different global hemispheres with our young children, partners and the joys of every day. We intentionally do not engage in critique, and rather take a positive, experimental path. We evoke stories of sustenance to make a story of sustenance. Sustenance is an experience of nourishment or fulfillment sensed. Common materials and the immaterial enter paragraphs (*italics*) and form poetic threads (*indented prose*) that entangle our ongoing academic collaboration. 'I' here is flowing

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into ‘we’, back and forth from, and to further inform the multiplicity of our academic mothering lives. The chapter is a porous entity, at times misty, that hopes to offer joy with its disruptions to recognizable meanings and the privileging of play.

Intro: Our Dreaming, Mothering Body

‘To dream is never an individual affair. My dream may be your dream experienced through the vessel of my becoming-form’ (Manning, 2009, p. 159).

Our co-writing relationship began as a shared poststructuralist symposium *dream* for children’s embodying relations with a place.² There we discovered our common matter and immatter: mothering with place. Collegially, we started to write to, and receive each other, musing on our own motherly, embodying experience of living with children’s worldly relations. Listening for the environmental conversations between our own children and the world that emerge daily, we responded to the call for chapters in this book, *(Re)birthing the Feminine in Academe*:

‘Everything that flows is water; all water is a kind of milk’ (Bachelard, 1999, p. 117).

Along the data rush and the ongoing call for research productivity in the age of the Anthropocene, a dance of sustainabilities is erupting *slow nutrient* data from our two academic motherly³ lives lived with place, as we write back and forth. A sense of sustenance⁴ is flowing, rhythmically rocking us, with humans and more-than-humans. As we collaborate in these motherly letters that pour between us, they collaborate with us like *river-delta dancing overflows*.

We partake with our children in the academy, living and writing with body and place awareness. We emerge from previous writings of body and place (e.g. see also Crinall, 2019; Crinall & Somerville, 2019; Gruenewald, 2003a, 2003b; Somerville, 1999). ‘Place’, necessarily embodied (Somerville, 1999, p. 13), unfolds between us as a *sacred space* (see Tuan, 2002) from and to where we move in sustenance.

Our communication plays with us, just like Hultman and Lenz-Taguchi (2010) noticed children and sand played with each other. As our words, letters, punctuation and images are exchanged and laid here, we ‘dance’ where dancing is a ‘pure plastic rhythm’ of a ‘sensing body

in movement' (Manning, 2009, p. 66). Manning and Massumi (2014) write: '*Movement embodies nothing but itself*. Movement [dances] bodies-forth, at any-point. Movement goes a-bodying' (p. 39).

Movement asks: How might academia be a nurturing, co-mothering *event*? How can we know 'sustenance' as mother-academics differently?

Wishing to alternatively navigate a thinking-in-*slow-nutrient*-movement feminine academe, we begin to slowly experiment with writing post-qualitatively beyond representationalism to activate uncertainty, unrecognizability and play (see also Charteris, Crinall, Etheredge, Honan, & Koro-Ljungberg, 2019; Crinall, 2019; Davies, 2017; Millei & Rautio, 2017; Ulmer, 2017; Ulmer & Koro-Ljungberg, 2015). We particularly desire for play. Play comes with a desire that unfolds 'while waiting for objects and organs to fall into place' (Massumi, 2002, p. 125). With Massumi, while waiting, we write to move with the distinct objects—in their porosity and movement—to birth writing events that are creative, jovial openings.

A Deleuzian/Guattarian world is made up of events that might unfold across an immanent plane of time and space, body and place (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 9; See also Grosz, 2005, p. 94). These events are dreamt, where dreaming 'is never an individual affair' (Manning, 2009, p. 159). Dreaming here is two-fold, in its navigation for feminism: With Manning's dream we understand and utilise the affect of (im)matter shared altering one another's world experience; and with Massumi's waiting, we understand our writing-to-move as a kind of falling (perhaps a falling asleep). Physically located in different hemispheres, one dreams while the other is writing and mothering, and vice versa.

Events enter play...

Co-responding

I am sitting at the outdoor setting that is our dining room table for now
 computer before me, I am writing
 my children⁵ *under the age of seven*
 are running past and I note
 'I am researching informal environmental learning and young children's
 embodying relations with nature.'
 Vivi lifts her hand and points to the moon

*Bananamoon*⁶

I send this across to you while she is fossicking for milk remarking
You are mist
 You are photographing the mist a hemisphere away while your two
 children also *under seven* eat breakfast
 Daniel is crafting his toast into a moon shape
bananamoon toast, the message reads.
 A photo arrives of the *mist* while I am writing.

Flowing on from our initial symposium meeting, you asked me as a co-mothering academic:

I ask a favor of you. Could you give me a task that I may perform? Something related to you or to your everyday activities?

I propose that you find the coldest place in the house and leave your data there.

and I responded:

Yes, I wonder what you think to put your data in a jar and preserve it. What do you se(ns)e? What does it create?

Dotted Co-mothering

When I return to a shared google document I see a pink cursor –

An attentive silhouette

I know your wishes from your flickering corporeal

A kind of academic polka: . a dot

Shall we dot?

I begin with a full stop

.

You add another

The day after ‘dotting’, you receive a message from me

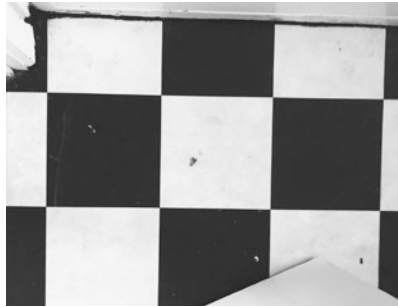
An image of a lynx

Timur has drawn a big cat covered in dots in dark pen. Across its body, I wrote, *He has dotted*. He didn’t know we have been dotting.

Later that day you returned home to write to me while I slept. *Vivi chose these boots. They are covered in dark grey. . . dots.*

Hmm...how about dotting more?

Unintentionally, one dot cosies us into a space where logic of *glossary* words and over-representation grow dim. New dotted patterns, *energised with 'nodding vigorously'*, are immaterial stories; fragmented post-qualitative aerial events *swanning* toward sustenance. They conceive our desire for more such openings to know, be, and feel differently.



A moth has passed away on the black-and-white-checked floor by the shower (above). Someone stepped on her wing, and now, a dot, she is encircled in a deathdance, sleeping amidst eucalyptus leaves gathered outside the zoo .. while more life is created elsewhere. ..

.....:.....:.....?

Encircling more pleasure, joy and sustenance around an ecological web of a feminine academe, *moth's death* may come as sustenance (lifeliness, breath) as each letter in the sealake, creates more life elsewhere. As we dot in her dust, a continual re-birth of eventful motherhoods *ÄÄÄ* is . playing out.

children's eyes
dreaming for mothering academia
Asleep

We both shearwaters write
head south
toward you

A moth-photo arrives
playfully
from our
sealakeletters of life

I kneel down to visit moth and find the squares, black and white, covered in the dust of the moth. They are blurred to grey. As I lean even closer I see each square is full of texture and colour: a blanket of images. *Colours in movement make grey*. Are these tiles in contact with my body the colourful humans and more-than-humans of daily life at work? Multiple possible stories lay out on this floor now, *a shower of eucalyptus leaves* and a plane. Are they, infinity-gestating grounds?

Infinity's Gestating Ground

.....:;: ... ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

I take these strings of photos and others from threads of communication
grandmothers and mothers
grey-woollen heritage
sandball
sticks
 and send them out
 a collage of our photographs
 in the Messenger stream.

Is this patchwork blanket a snugly shawl? If so, the warmth of exchange from body to body, place to place, is a mother's soft arms with two blank squares (below). Imperfectly it is wrapping a newborn body. I came here with *eyes closed, a sandune breathing*. On a warm, grey couch, I found some sustenance. You left a comment: *eyes closed*. For you—*slow, patience, tranquility of waiting, waitability*—you write from body outward to place and back about you with theory laced in at the pace my feminine desires. At this child-filled body-place pace our husbands assure us, *see how far you get*. We wonder on partaking in what seems a generally cognitive, childless, fast-paced academia.



The two blank(et) squares in the collage above, are they infinity's gestating ground? Here we women mothering *with commas* nestle on this dreaming body We are fledging and fleshing out an imperceptible, moving mother-researcher-hood. Our correspondence is *expanding* into many possible iterations. It gestates events with grey; shearwater doubles; moths; the moon; and a swan's call.

With more events flying, calling and ...

... pooling post-qualitatively

I note: *It was my colleague who said of dots: 'dots dotting dottages'.* Dots and images (dottages) foresaw a kind of writing-with that called forth our letters to speak anew. We often sat in this way to write the current chapter. There was a sustenance we received writing to and with each other as motheracademics. To dive through the sea of letters was to dive through the skins of our children who reach out their arms daily to gift us matter that matters in that moment. When Vivi was born her birth was documented under the title, *Day Dot*. Now I see we are not writing with dots. We are writing with children, as in potential. Dotting *dottages* further threaded words into *wordstrings* and phrases with us:

Swalesforest
Lakewesternportwater

write in slow
'greylead on white paper
in dark after milk-feed, chocolate melting
greywrite, slip away, words wash out. back to dishes, table-wipe.
What is, how do we live
this sustaining daily rhythm of mothering-with?

Whether spoken of mothering-writing rituals, *in dark after milk-feed, chocolate melting*; by the children, *swalesforest*; or played together by us, *lakewesternportwater*; familiar words formed new yet unknown words and phrases, collocations. The correspondent (im)material that moves back and forth forms a shower of mother, child and place via words, dots, images and letters in 'wordstrings'. These 'overspills' of dotting data (Millei & Rautio, 2017) pixilate to tune into and emerge out of our everyday motherly academic co-meditation with the world around us. Accepted by and as a body belonging to (no particular) places, these *datapuddles* are pooling amongst the paragraphs in this chapter as word bodies. They obscure meanings as an opportunity to wonder more. While

Vivi and Daniel pause at the dotty feather
Ting! I receive *a tickle* of it from the message in my pocket
 I am, their mother, eager to follow the trails of a common travel-
 ling matter
 they sense and point at, draw –
moths and moons
shearwaters, dots and more –
 (*There's an elephantcloud!*)
 with the camera or pencils
 these submerge my body
 At times I desire to silently mess with (the raining) words
 dots and characters
 to playfully think with hands
How do you (want to) do, know, feel and become as an
academymother?

As we messily collaborate with our correspondence, *submerging*, questions ferment (with) questions. One appears in a wordstring above condensing during a playful hour: *What is this sustaining daily rhythm of mothering-with?* In the context of academia, we, two women, *desire to silently mess with* these queries, *playfully thinking with our hands* on the (in)tangibles of the specific, ordinary day across virtual borderless trails, mothers-at-work always-already-in-sustenance across time and space.

Another event forms as a cumulus *elephantcloud* out of the last: *How do you (want to) do, know, feel and become as an academymother? ..*

Otherring Grey

Our *nest-gathering-treasures* correspondence, where moss-grown sticks meet rainbow shells, is an exchange we cherish and so it cherishes our dreams as mothers and researchers, as mothering-researchers. Weaving with what we see of *young children's embodying relations with nature* we share our wishes by sending and receiving the *featherstring* language Edith, Vivi, Timur and Daniel have gifted us with their hands from the (un)roofed places.



Timur made this kind of roofed character out of sticks gathered in the forest. Are they a pile of hieroglyphs or a Japanese kanji character? I resist naming it, while many simultaneously possible meanings arise: 'house', 'eat', or 'place'. Without the need for a name, these (un)roofed places nourishingly welcome us back 'home'. They *blink* at us this way sending our *blown-of-a-dandelion* wishes outward:

I wish... I wish I could be there to meet up and lie with you listening to the trees. I wish we could go with this chapter to a mutual ground. I wish there was a grant on the Sheoak-tree's breath importance. I dreamed I (still) had

these images. No, mamma, says Edie. They disappeared. We still have [them] in our heads and hearts and bodies.

Deliberately virtual, our communication is, however, a silent reciprocity of desires that *fly* together. As both *at home where we feel comfortable and belong*, and both in a *feminine academe*, this togetherness is nurtured by the earthlings of our embodying mothering worlds. They are our academic work toward a future feminism Elizabeth Grosz (2011) dreams about. Here..

...we no longer look inward to affirm our own positions, experiences, beliefs but outward, to the world and to what we don't control or understand in order to expand, not confirm, what we know, what we are, what we feel. Feminist theory can become the provocation to think otherwise, to become otherwise. It can be a process of humbling the pretensions of consciousness to knowledge and mastery and a spur to stimulate a process of opening oneself up to the otherness that is the world itself. (Grosz, 2011, p. 87)

Where the world others, and sustenance is produced in and as a difference born of *children's hands, orange beaks, flowers pointing to the moon and three singing ravens*, we dance and correspond. At some point, the difference finds us holding onto the moving thread between black and white—grey—both in research projects and parenting...*ting*. In life at *home*.

Ting tang ting ting tang

Nervously making preparations to leave to Russia

With two kids on three flights

It is not the first time experience for me, but I'm nervous nevertheless

You say: *I photograph the landscape toward the north*

toward you? It is the water as the lightest rain that has blurred the relationwater/landscape into grey. Songs in my head and a feeling of calm today

I send a photo in return: *And this is my grey today. Just from writing this I feel better.*

Grey calmed my stomach down
 Sarah thinking with grey, my body hearing:
 Grosz was singing: *'not confirm, what we know,
 what we are,
 what we feel'*.
 Expand!
 You corrected yourself: *No, it's not that I'm calm today, it's that I'm
 lake*
 Grey soothed my anxiety.
 I went to the airport not worried about an upcoming trip home.
 I was grey, I was water, a rhythmic surf of a capable, confident
 womanhood, extending a thread of dotted grey
 From you
 4:.....4
 To me
 Washing the motherhood land.
 Later I share: *grey-ordinary-beautiful-rich-deep-sublime in its
 calmness-ability to wait. People always shame my grey hair:
 'It is awful, you are woman, you are young, you have to be brighter'*.
 Grey is *blurring black and white, sea and sky*. Moving 'grey' blurs
 the clichés, extremes, societal 'wants' and norms, ideals, and the
 expectations we feel; The specific type of writing; the one kind of
 a mother expected; and an academic or nature that is pristine and
 green.

*and there is the silver I love of the sea
 Grey rivers
 Grey sky
 I'm lake*

It has no name strangely. or google doesn't know it

Two mothers exchanging 'grey' as a mantra is not so much about
 the word as it is about the conceptual co-meditation it might bear
 for two becoming more. More than they are 'allowed' to be or
 feel. Where sustainability is so often a pondering over reduction
 and lack—grey lacking color—the sustenance of nature—us—not
 only green but also grey, might generously be found in little won-
 ders-movements of daily life (Crinall, 2019). Our achromatic rela-
 tions become a provocation Grosz (2011) talks about. We confide in

our changing-greying-growing-aging-mothering body and live, as many mothers do, with the expanding multicolored (im)matter of every day. It returns to us—*I'm on my way*—in the open plane of *home-made* pages and spaces. Here events unfurl in play and grey moves a stilled body—a changing-greysky-growing-noname-mothering body—into flight. For us it is one new way to dream an academia with motherhood.

This event flies over.

Shearwater Drawing

Look, mum, a feather for your collection. A grey feather puffs onto the café floor, from the coldest corner where your treasures gather. We are meeting in Sydney, three-years later. *Look Anna!* I pass it over.

I have found this nutritious waterhole of letter-rivers:

-10,000 km

Waterbodytime in full moon

we caress with feet in grey sand process

politics of affect resonates with undulations

BE

On water and breath

BE

On water and breath

Shearwater vulnerable flies

You have messaged this photo of a shearwater drawing by

Timurpencilpapergrid:



The shearwaters return this week, he has reminded me. I slow down to the motion and listen to the babbling of snowflakes melting.

I note, we slow our typing and we find a kind of lifefecan grow with in. The 'I' here is leaning and entangling a nest, and leaning into and out of (im)matter 'from which the body and its objects and organs unfold' (Massumi, 2002, p. 107).

then my period came and i thought i needed rest

I am crying

Keep going

Heavy..yes

draws us back to the moon. and rest.

slowness. a woman's rhythm is not 9-5

Shearwaters are entangling and befriending ontological companions (see Rautio & Vladimirova, 2017)

with their *eyelidthin eggshells* and

swanmoonwhite honeycomb bones

bedding their *icy nest*

their ghostly imprints that leave rookeries and forests alike melt into Vivi's and Timur's hands

into mine

into yours

wrapped with chocolate

flat in books

Shearwaters are potentially *sustaining our nature's reserve* with their daily movements that leave material *imprints* of carbon and nutrient. Downy feathers, nitrous excrement, and discarded calciferous *eyelidthin eggshells* and *swanmoonwhite honeycomb bones* are left to disintegrate for the sandune rookeries yearly. Vivi gathers them avidly (for Anna?) and I bed them in their cold-corner nests, once forgotten. In a 'nature reserve' we are asked to leave 'nature's objects' on site, but *Edienest*, *Danielmonster*, *Viviskull* and *TimurLake* are *childrenforests* themselves (Vladimirova & Rautio, 2018). They know a different border inflected by porosity and chance (Massumi, 2002).

While these bodies, in cahoots with children, are attempting to live every day in this nourishing space of place and body, are they also time?

*paras resize like shearwater heart because of the seasons
temperatures (of the air and of the bodies)
of moon...;*

On tempo a shearwater bird's stomach reduces and heart enlarges yearly. They journey 10,000 km from an East-Australian rookery to the productive seas of Siberia and back (Serventy, 1996). I look to a map to see where you are heading. *Amazed. Minusinsk* is in Siberia. Around the time the shearwaters are *waiting for objects and organs to fall into place* in Southeastern Australia *you are leaving* to Siberia, where they will soon be too. *you arrive*, with *Timur, your mum*, and *a red sunset* where *the nature near Minusinsk looks so much like Australia!*

As 'desire (begins to work out) waiting for objects and organs to fall into place' (Massumi, 2002, p. 125), Timur's shearwater drawing reveals a way to travel by the desires that befall us all, waiting too, for the next edit. Next message. Next reply. *Worddrivers* that *brkbr* are a gestating, *nursing child* with birth-stories that spark *chocolatespoonbowl*. On route, back and forth, we are impressed in a *feathercycle* tempo that is cyclical and travelling.



Many birds fly in this emergent pattern pasted here, made by dots-in-play, as the safest way to travel across time and space. How might we know our own correspondent *bodyflight* paths with shearwaters?

I am with the shearwater down I collected for you in my pockets.

Rhythmic writitude flaps a moving, slowing time, *ravenfluffed* by Koro-Ljungberg and Wells (2018) and their academic etching: 'What might slowness in scholarship produce?' This pace that leaves and returns anew is *a* shearwater pace, or *s/pace*.

The shearwaters didn't return on the 27th of Sept two years ago, provoking queries among many, are they okay? If you don't message for a while, I wonder: how is Sarah?

and I you.

It occurs to me to ask *academywomen* I notice rushing, *ruok?*

If these moving dots are making 'V' shapes to fly across the screen, they evoke an answer. In the sweet silence of playful, wordless co-meditating correspondence:

-VVVVVVVVVV VVV VVV /VV

Motherhood travels as do birds (shearwaters) and, well, are all mothers partial, as in part of a co-mingling whole that may sustain? Only capable of so much in this capitalist, nuclear family way of being in the world, a shearwater migrates, shifts her body to suit the journey, lives in rhythms. Our completion of a journey to siberia is as shearwater doubles.

As shearwater doubles we...

...Pause

I pause.

Events are? Example please?

Pleasure replies,

the way that when I take a walk I am with the world differently, entirely,

in a writing event with you.

That I am 'turned on' in a switch kind of way to a new way of seeing.

This is of course at the embodied and emplaced level knowable as

Following edie through the scrub

noticing the children noticing the purple moths dancing under the swamppaperbark forest

porridge moth and timur's sleeping moth is on the floor

– the common matter.

And this:

I shiver with your ability to do this messy tangential writing which gives me a nervous tick to interrupt our neat paragraphs and then, boom, we have a shared epiphany
 – the common immatter :)))) :))))))

Mothering

S.o later in the *undulating grey*, we are exchanging emails on mothering and nothingness when a moth appears and another event is here.

*I keep seeing the ring you and girls found on the beach.
 Is this ring a nest, egg in nest.
 Our mutual infinite selves gestating?
 Ring of circle of life in 3D?
 Now I keep playing with you mother, and see moth.
 The moth in song that goes to the moon.*

Mothers at home, we have:

Moth. her wingedness with desire, is here living with us, our family member, flying in the rooms, over our sleeping time, in between the air currents raising up from a new humidifier. *Funny. I noticed ours is still near porridge pot.* Can't stop wondering at this moth. *Ours is still and yours sounds to be moving moving moving.* Our moth is slow time for me. *Reminding me to breathe, wipe benches, choose sweeping instead of check for messages.* For me, moth, i like how invisible, slow, everywhere and nowhere this moth is here. *An omnipresent being.* Most of the time hiding somewhere, here, in traces of her night flight, slow, but moving. *A moment's thought. Explains nothing perhaps.* Today Timur came back from school pointing at a small moth. *OOOOOO to your moth sleeping. Sleeping porridge moth.*

With our letters, *gestating moth-ability*, we are born in a particular way: With our desire for *night flight* with the moon, *slow, but moving.* We travel everywhere and nowhere *as* our eventful letterscapes and dottages in a V-formation of multiple matterings. While flying, *her wingedness*, we *desire sleeping and slow sweeping.* *An omnipresent being moving moving moving.*

In flight, we wonder, where is she, motheracademia, seeking to go? Via moth at home, we know that it will be slow. In what other conditions can 'I' live joyfully sustaining (in) the academy?

*A moth has come to stay
 Moths never come here
 And purple moths cloud the floor of the swamppaperbark forest
 Edie points them out
 Look, Anna's moths.
 At home, Vivi has made a purple moth mask. don't know why?
 She doesn't know of your letters as she paints a purple dot slowly on a
 white page. Is this the moth you are occupied with right now?
 Her brush moves up and down the page, until she throws the page
 in agitation like a moth at a back door.
 I copy all moth messages
 All pages are laid out while Daniel is home making songs with the
 world –
 Is there a song titled: daniel-vivi-paper-dot-moths?
 I send a photograph of
 dotted moth...
 thank you for sharing with me, you reply and take moth-light into
 the hardly moonlight finding a way to navigate toward the moon.
 good night*

Mothering might also be *mothering*, as in travelling freely into difference. In an alternative navigation for feminism that doesn't seek more for the feminine from the patriarchy, Grosz's (2011) unrecognisable other flies us elsewhere, along the ever-changing.



In the *hardly moonlight* moth flies across a global landscape of immatter. Her *moon-dot* is always with her, *taking moth-light*, variously as a crescent *bananamoon* or a half-moon hat. A *painted purple moth dot* from here on earth, the moon is visibly luminescent through our open roof,

and so she can see the *moving purple moth cloud* writing with the power of the loving body, the purple power of love. Is this us peering in on *daniel-vivi-paper-dot-moths* at home, *co-making with the world songs* we might want to hear? We are listening with an elephant-sized ear.

To read these lines above over again, we lift up and fly (as in flow) together. We smile with !!! and))) along the sides of the dappled edge. We are charged with punctuation and dots *moving up and down the white page*, painted by the hands of our children.

In this kind of artful and ordinary mothering that travels with our children's attention, we are moving, not always through the Euclidean flat spaces (overcoming distances and doors), but rhythmically through virtual curves of academic writing and everyday living.

There was a time when I, as *mother*, couldn't sleep travelling a curvaceous space into a new time zone, while my breastfed child would not stay comfortably awake: That conference catch-up that time when *the moth in song goes to the moon*, was an event.

Mother and the Moon

Unable to sleep through the night as a moth (moth-er), I flew with Vivi, two years old at the time, across hemispheres. As though you were one wing and I the other, we flew toward each other for five days from two different corners of the globe. Thank you for the mutual lift you gave. We carried a baby on our back to receive an award for my doctoral methodology. In a day/dream, it played out this way.

Are you going?

Yes

I am going too!

I am with empty chairs about me in silent room. I know you have come, and sit in the far left behind me.

Is :it majestic? I cannot find the room.

I am to receive an award, and have travelled this far with Vivi and my mother.

My friend the moon. Look mum the moon. Hello moon. Despite its daily changing shape, Vivi asks to go for nightly walks and seems to know the moon by a sense other than sight.

Perhaps there is a body-place relation that blurs the binary that attempts to hold them apart?

Vivi is the moon, you assert to my correspondence on her pointing finger at the moon nightly.

The ceremony began at 1 p.m. (3 a.m. in her southern hemisphere home) and the moon was singing in a chant ‘*home, hoooooome*,’ sobbing, disoriented. I am her mother. *Mother*. At first I asked *my* mother to take her from the room. *I was asking you to go and take her back*, you offer me later. I looked at the bare chairs by me. Me alone at the back door of a childless, academic tradition I didn’t care for. I got up and followed my mother and *Vivi: look mum the moon*. Navigating far from the doom of a light bulb, we, the moth and the moon, came back to work our own way.

I knew you would, you say.

My *circling back to motherhood* as moth, toward *Vivi’s tears*, returns *Vivi* to my back, and now the room is alight. No longer blocked by a door, we returned by bounding into the room together. I receive the award with a brimming smile of tears with *vivimoon* upon my back.

After it was over, as the *mother* I’d like to be, I passed you on the escalator. In that moment of encounter, our moth-shearwater-bodies *swan* a counterclockwise dance around the world as the *Mother moon*. From here, our moving together in this relational eclipse looks illuminated by our correspondence and the common (im)material as rhythms that have long ago—from birth—began to take on a spherical, glowing form (Manning, 2009).

•|||• •••..... ÄÄÄÄ

A last event rotates into a glide

...

The Swan’s Call

*He is very patient in their disrupted communication.
Oh how our children are calling us to include their..hope of talking
letstry letsdo letscall*

Mum look our swans! just above us—Timur is pointing to a rare instance of the swans being so vertically-close to the humans and jumping up in his attempt to reach toward the flying-away trio. *This baby-bird didn't lasted, because when it has human smells on a baby-bird, the mamma-bird can't even recognise the baby-bird, almost. Don't ever ever ever touch a baby-bird*—Edith appealingly warns in her personal YouTube vlog about animals in her garden. By chance, I am the sound and a written character of an overheard conversation of children on rhythms and sustainability.

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You and me, us, are we becoming the silent witnesses of an 'ecological 'bodying' in young children where the limits between body and world are blurred' (Manning in 'Affective attunement in a field', 2012, para. 20)? Our research on children's embodying *chatter* with nature is dreamily finding its *unroofed* space here in this chapter *as swans called across valley* through our children bodying and pointing, in rhythm with each other, not to a place, spot or just a passive object, but to an event. Each event they respond to *in hope of talking* is an extension of their bodies, and accordingly, our mother researchers' lives. More than this, we wonder if it is a daily dynamic extension—an expansion of porous bodies in relation—a re-birth of a planetary sustenance.

Timur was dreaming to see swans but we can never find them.

*It seems you called exactly the time Timur and swan met. I didn't
take my phone with me.*

oh wow!

My Nan from Western port called me swan.

*i wake thinking shearwater
but then vivi returns me to the call timurswan
by watching 'Barbie and swan lake'.gee whiz.
the swan and timur set a rhythm to my day.*

The flow isn't a given. There are threads to grasp

This de-localised narrative, an overflow of time and place, is also making an attempt to challenge partly what we un/consciously think is our personal boundary. In the times of a rushing neoliberal system rendering our isolated lives dissocial, unsupportive, and poor in hope, might we try and turn our gazes to each other and to children thinking-living slowly with the (im)matter we all share? By acting in a hope of ‘extending a thread’, where there are threads to follow (see Barad, 2010, n.p.), we find we are in both an event and a dialogue, through sending letters, writing, *noticing the children noticing*, gifting *dotted boots* and *grey blurring* the scapes. We are engaged in that co-dreaming affair of more than two Manning (2009) talks about. With their extending, embodying, rhythmic co-meditation with the world, children ask us to join a variety of sustainable human-nonhuman porous collaborations we can only dream of. *Letstry letsdo lets call* this kinship outward and away from toxic *smells of disrupted communication*. Thank you, Edie.

We bring this thought further to the *delicious, stewing, skirting* mother-mother co-writing relations. *What happens when two formations meet/collide in birds’ lives?* In the ‘Λ’-shaped flight of swans, always already othering, *birds use each other to save energy, via ones wing flap. It is reciprocal and each lifts another up.* Co-animated and uplifting (Black, Crimmins, & Jones, 2017), can the flight of mothers with provocatively-imagined matter—become a part of an emergent complex of academic motherhoods? We could envision this *mothering (im)matter* travelling to one another together, rather than in cardinal directions as we proposed in ‘othering grey’:

*I photograph the landscape toward the north
toward you?*

And your mattering flies over to me:



My mother is remotely aware of our chapter. She calls via Skype while I am writing on how *motherhood travels as swans do*. ‘Annie, your father

has two paintings – a gift from the artist’, she says. ‘One of them is for you. It is the Virgin Mary holding a swan. I thought you might like it’.
Barad writes on the entangling threads

*but I didn’t anticipate the thread following us.
Right behind the corner.
Rhythm watching us and opening its yellow frock coat
to send some swans to us to you and me.
with erin and swans now
while breastfeeding Vivi*

Can we possibly trust the rhythms of mattering and *mothering-with* to re-birth our sustainable futures?

Outro: *Mother*

*tapping on a shoulder
holding a waist
swaying it side-to-side
in a ‘differential attunement’ (Massumi, 2015, p. 117)
the gift of migrating birds
Are a cumulus of bodyplacespacetime
mistifying mindset
‘what does the moon do?’
Grows you/us so*

And so we *grow* (as) various *river-delta* dancing *overflows*. Slowly, theoretically and (im)materially, these motherly embodying events *swan* aerial (re)births of rhythmic, *co-flapping* movement: *lifeliness*.

^>^..|\.....

Co-flapping aerial events glimpse the V-formation dots that themselves lift each other, pixelate further and expand into more.

We note, creative co-writing flourishes in contact with the specificities of a material and immaterial, ordinary day to a mystifying beat.

from [screen] to flesh, the between of night and day, of appearance and disappearance, creates the first living being...and it is already more than one. (Manning, 2009, p. 121)

We sway now, as virtual borderless localities and lives—grey, temporo-spatial flying shearwater, mother, moth, moon, slow, gleeful and swan’s bodies. Created jovially on infinity’s gestating ground, between *screen* and *flesh*, this multipliciter mother gently migrates between being two, one and more.

The number of maternal event(s) fledged and flown with sustainability research may be known, unknown and unknowable: How many various events are playing out in the s/pace of motherly body-place relations, in a feminine academia today?



Through the studio door, *adore*, we glimpse our shared co-respon-
dance waltzing out of the colon and comma crevices imaginatively
 opening in this chapter. (Re)birthed are many (im)material moth-
 erresearchers. Our complex lives have composed a tune we can
 move to
 between intro and outro
 swaying to a feminism sung with our children
 hands on the hips of body and place
 as sustenance.

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A drybed of imagination
 with cracks and fermenting leaf litter
 puddle and *featherskull*
 Piles-paragraphs of nutritious leaves on riverbed
 are still disintegrating
 feeding
 dissipating
 accumulating-with
 Events *eyes close*.

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Notes

1. This paper is written entirely as collective collaboration. Both authors feel indebted to the other's insights and inspiration as productive force to what came next and on. The co-authors order their collaboration based on the order of time - who had first contact with this specific publication possibility. Other author arrangement possibilities include: Anna Vladimirova and Sarah Crinall; Sarah Vladimirova and Anna Crinall; Sassanja Vladimirova-Crinall.
2. We write across continents where 'place' is necessarily embodied (see Somerville, 1999), where bodies are sent outward, into a space we emerge with in relation (Crinall, 2019). Between us Place unfolds as a space of security - sacred and meaningful in nature (Tuan, 2002). We have sought to write here on the human-nonhuman-material-discursive plane and so have omitted most place names for this chapter.
3. This chapter focuses on the sustaining nature of mother-to-mother-and-more in academia. For more reading on the vital issues of financial, physical and mental health and well-being for women and mothers in academia see other chapters in this publication, and Janta, Lugosi, and Brown (2012), Florescu (2013), and Traff-Prats (2018).
4. We define sustenance as experiencing some kind of nourishment and fulfillment, metaphysically, physically and necessarily collectively, in a moment, and over time.

5. Our children were aware of and involved in any private correspondence involving the exchange of their material.
6. The letter-drawn phrases and words appear in the text italicised. All grammar and spelling misnomers are kept.

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Mothering Bodies in Unloving Institutions

Louise Gwenneth Phillips, Helen Johnson, Sarah Misra
and Agli Zavros-Orr

Welcome

Through reading this chapter, we invite you to join us in a new kind of knowledge making, borne from fifty-five combined years of motherhood and fifty-nine years of active research, across two hemispheres and nineteen institutions. The space we seek to carve out here is creative, subversive

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and transformative. It is a canvas of becoming, where process presides over product, and truth can shift kaleidoscopically. Being and understanding one's being is an intensely emotional process. Understanding and making sense of lived experience of being a person, a mother and academic further builds on the work of Mountz et al. (2015) as movement away from being automatons to a neoliberal agenda. Working collaboratively, sharing stories and through our methodology of gifting—we explore the diversity of lived experience within academic spaces and motherhood in the motherland (UK) and the colony (Australia). Through our emergent methodology (defined by our creative process of reading, listening, thinking, making and gifting), we note the spaces where our stories intersect and deviate in response to noted tensions, challenges and opportunities.

We invite you to explore our narratives, to locate yourself within them, rotating the lens to create your own patterns from our words. In so doing, you become the fifth author of this text, joining our communal process of searching, sharing and supporting. We are inspired by feminist slow scholarship, to take time and to collectively care, and engage in a savoured “resistance to the accelerated timelines of the neoliberal university” (Mountz et al., 2015, p. 1238). We have rawly written our entangled lived experiences of emotional and embodied effects that are often deemed irrelevant and ignored (Ahmed, 2014) of being both mothers and academics. We held and felt these lived encounters over time. When we could claim unpressured time and space, we creatively responded back with gifted crafted words and imagery of empathy, care and awakened insights, engaging with what Puig de la Bellacasa (2012) referred to as “thinking-with”, in which “relations of thinking and knowing require care” (p. 198). To align with the feminine and mother, we exclusively thought with female scholarship and brought together our collective embodied lived trauma, composing multi-vocal biographies of mothering and academia, to heal, to hear and to hold embodied wisdom.

Come, turn the kaleidoscope of lived experience that is shared with you through our creative writing, gift making and giving. Through our own feminist ethic of care emerges acceptance of the individual, and a willingness to make room for their perspective with care, trust, mutual consideration and solidarity (Held, 2005). We mother our mothering

in spaces away from unloving institutions, nurturing “sustainable and flourishing relations” in place of the “survivalist or instrumental” roles into which we are so often cast (Puig de la Bellacosa, 2012, p. 198).

Coming Together

We are four, who have not all met in person. Louise invited us together by instinct, a sensing of diverse mothering in academia and interest in diverse thinking, writing, making with.

Louise: At the time of receiving an invitation from Linda, Ali and Susie (Editors) to contribute a collectively written chapter on motherhood in academia, I was dealing with months of vertigo and neuralgia from institutionally triggered trauma. I had embodied disbalance. I knew writing a chapter for this book would evoke more balanced space for my authentic self. A week later, I went to the *5th Arts-based research and artistic research* conference at TATE Liverpool. Helen opened the conference with a provocative spoken word piece of her lived experience of motherhood in stolen morsels of time. I felt a connection that she dared to be performative at an academic conference. Later I was drawn to Sarah’s installations of Barbie in scenes of mother as academic. Barbie’s glossed smile and pristine presentation highlighted the facade working mothers earnestly struggle to present against the landscape of chaos.

I sensed Helen and Sarah would bring arts-based research, diverse perspectives and diverse experiences to such a chapter. When I first read the book proposal, I thought of my Australian friend Agli. We worked together at a university, we have both since left. Over the 9 years I have known Agli I have witnessed her provide the most intensely devoted mothering to her adopted sons and come to peace with claiming her intersex identity. A story of mothering that so few know.

Helen: I remember Sarah’s installation vividly. I was on stolen time—away from my son for only the fourth night ever. I felt dislocated and incomplete, a piecemeal mother, making for a piecemeal academic.

For me, this tension echoed the near impossibility of being true to both teaching and research, as a mid-career academic at an institution which increasingly audits outputs across both domains. The opportunity to contribute to Sarah's discussion wall helped me bracket these feelings and become more present. Agli, I met later through her words. For me, our ensuing conversations have helped unite the competing domains of motherhood and academia, so that they become mutually enriching.

I brought to this dialogue my experience as a spoken word poet and social scientist, identities, skill sets and ways of thinking which I held as equally dislocated for over a decade. This changed when I encountered arts-based research, during a project on dementia stigma (Gregory, 2014). Here, I could be creative, performative, emotive *and* rigorously analytic. Later, I discovered I could be collaborative and community-focused too, a combination exemplified through the "collaborative poetics" method (Johnson et al., 2018). It was this method on which I presented at the conference where Louise, Sarah and I first connected (Johnson & Wimpenny, 2018), and which brought me to the creative and collaborative experience of co-authoring this chapter. For me, then, this work fulfils my drive to "think-with" not only others, but also myself (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012).

Sarah: When I was exhibiting at the Liverpool Tate and struggling to reconcile the demands of family life with a challenging full-time academic career while writing up my doctorate. I was running on empty and felt depleted, exhausted and isolated but the opportunity to be part of such an inspiring project was too incredible to pass up.

I met Louise when she asked me to provide an English voice in a recorded piece which told the heartbreaking story of her ancestor and Helen soon after when she came to see my work and we shared experiences of the emotional pain in attempting to balance mothering and research. Agli and I got to know one another through the marvels of technology, first sharing honest written pieces then through our regular group online meetings.

Agli: Having previously collaborated with Louise (see Phillips & Zavros, 2012), I felt safe to share my lived experience. Informed by ethics of care (Gilligan, 1993; Held, 2005), I consciously consider how

the space was created for creativity, voice, signature and authorship. It was through Louise that I first got to know Helen and Sarah. Meeting Helen and Sarah—via email and later through a Zoom meeting highlighted for me that we were all on the same page. From the start, I knew that we were creating a space that would allow me to understand:

...how tension between responsibility and rights sustains the dialectic of human development is to see the integrity of two disparate modes of experience that are in the end connected [that] while an ethic of justice proceeds from the premise of equality – that everyone should be treated the same – an ethic of care rests on the premise of nonviolence – that not one should be hurt. (Gilligan, 1993, p. 174)

We four have formed an epistemic community (see Hankinson Nelson, 1993) of mothers. We are together negotiating gendered/sexed epistemic phenomenological realities in academia (see Potter, 1993), and our bodies working across space and time have come together to share knowledge to make sense of the crisis of reason (see Grosz, 1993). We emerge as knowers and doers. For me, this connects to Puig de la Bellacasa's (2012) collective dialogic processes that promote "sustainable and flourishing relations" (p. 198).

Writing and Making Motherhood in Academia

We began by each creatively writing our personal lived experiences of mothering in academia and emailing these to the other three. This sharing was held in a space of feminist caring drawing from Puig de la Bellacasa's (2012) notion of *thinking-with* "inciting us to enlarge our ontological and political sense of kinship and alliance to dare in exercises of category transgression, of boundary redefinition that put to test the scope of humanist care" (p. 201). Through the process of sharing our lived experiences, we thought and felt with each other, and forged kinships and alliances not present before, creating transformative relations between us four. Rather than skimming over each author's writing, we sat with them and held them, generating an entangled collective.

Helen: In the course of my normal working day, I sit at my desk for hours on end, relentlessly typing out my lectures, communications and research writing. This is the space in which I work. I will stay here unmoving, be I hungry, full-bladdered, fingertip-numb or croaking-hot. But I could not work in such a stultifying way for this chapter. Instead, I left my house with notepad and pen to sit at the foot of the nearby Sussex Downs. I composed cross-legged in long, flower-straggled grass, with the reassuring weight of my writing grounding me to the earth beneath. In this way, my writing practices enabled me to reflect feminist concerns with situated, embodied and sensory forms of knowledge, which align with ways of knowing that Springgay (2012) and others have identified as inherent to mothering and motherhood. They reflect too a slowing down of my thinking and creative processes which Mountz et al. (2015) argue for as part of a “feminist politics of resistance” in the academy.

This was a reassembling of myself as creative woman, mother and academic, aspects of self which I compartmentalise through necessity on a daily basis. The poem I composed muses on and mourns this separation of self, the need to become less—a lesser mother, lesser wife and lesser human even—in order to carry out the work that is required of me as an academic. Yet the poem also speaks of my fight to remain whole and my refusal to deny the central place which my son has held in my life in the four years since his birth. In this sense, it is a reclamation of self and a rebellion against the constraints of a neoliberal, masculinised academy.

Tea Break

1.
*He is six weeks' old,
and everything is new.
It is the first time the moon has set,
the dew has pearled,
buttercups have flexed towards the sun;
that I have sensed a tiny heartbeat,*

*as I type,
drumming email after email,
after grant proposal, after peer review;
tiptoed marking
over effervescent snores,
which cannot possibly resound
from such small lungs.*

*There is a cell that I can book
to nurse my son,
on blue-plasticed doctor's couch,
gently-staining chair.
But time starves.
So I commute from lecture hall,
to car park feed,
clock off to nappies changed on office floor.
And she quips,
"at least you have the chance
to drink your tea.
Welcome back to work."*

*2.
Five months' old.
We wean him young.
Now he suckles food from plastic bags,
a grounded astronaut,
while my breasts desiccate,
no longer orbiting a pump,
for thirty thirsty minutes,
every other hour,
of every day.*

*I work from home when schedules allow,
but there is no quorum here.
My heart cramps with the study door.
I cannot hear him playing,
I have lectures to redraft.
I cannot hear him laughing,*

*I have data to transcribe,
I cannot hear him crying,
there is so much work to do.*

3.

*One year old.
I am a perpetual motion machine,
relentless, unstoppable, promotable.
Incomplete.
Exhaustion is my everything.
But it's our little secret,
that I woke at five,
that my mind is bleached muslin,
that the fracture forced by leaving him,
will never heal.
Sometimes, I doubt my status as his mother.
I know I will never be enough.*

*Today I told a colleague,
that my family comes first.
It felt like insurrection.*

4.

*Three years' old.
He says to me,
"My tears are like dry biscuits."
I hold him tight.*

In the months after I sent this to Louise, Agli and Sarah, I received creative responses to my piece that were enormously affirming, and to find themes, emotions and experiences from my work echoing across theirs. Yet it was also disheartening that these strong, talented and sage women could feel as desperate I did, as our lives, children and academic careers span on their own divergent spindles. Thus, I saw a strong synergy in our combined energy, restlessness, guilt and of course love. As Sarah wrote:

1

*As I begin the daily plough through a workload that overwhelms
I tell myself that I must complete three days' work in one day
If I am to have a weekend with my children.*

2

*He is almost sixteen now
And I think of Helen as I type
Drumming email after email,
After grant proposal after peer review
And of how some things don't change because after all this time I still
feel like this.*

3

*Time starves.
I commute from the lecture hall,
To karate lessons,
Dropping him at his part-time job, school or friends' houses
And I think that at least we'll have the chance to talk in the car.*

4

*I work from home when schedules allow.
There is not enough time to be either the mother or the academic that I
want to be.
Snatched moments, a perpetual motion machine,
Relentless, unstoppable, incomplete.
Exhaustion is my expectation
And I realise that he is made in my image.
His life as crammed full as mine and that soon he won't need me at all.*

5

*Sixteen years old.
He says to me,
"See you later Mum"
And I long to hold him tight.*



Fig. 1 Tea, biscuit, tears [gifted made response from Louise]

Louise's gift (see Fig. 1) brought a different kind of resonance, evoking a dark, dislocated chill through her crafting of an eyeball resting on biscuit crumbs at the base of a porcelain teacup.

Agli's response, in turn, is dialogic and connective. She writes of "Mothering, caring, nurturing ... in its complexities", revealing how "words connect us across space and time".

I.
Words, move and interconnect us...
... birthmother I am not.
Words connect us across space and time.
I do not know of early motherhood ... I dreamt of my babies first
breath... I give thanks to another...
Tears fall.
Mothers... in their creativity as the take their place and make room
for others too...

2.

I hold my breast, as I read your words...mine hold no such purpose. I read transfixed. I celebrate you in all you do.

I feel guilty...I was pulled away...thoughts...floating

Motherhood...complex... I wonder what if... I felt less than...yet I am mother, different but the same.

Our energy...a drum beat upon this earthly realm...you are not alone...

3.

Muslin shadows fall across my space. I see mothers moving to the beat...

The drum beats a soundscape (mother-child-mother-child) ... resounding waves...a life force.

United. Together stonger than alone.

Together they dance...setting the tune for what is to come.

4.

I see... you hold on. I have dreamt to be where you are with my own.

Reading your words...tears fall!

Mine first is not a baby any more.

I hold on tight...inside...not ok to hug in public you know.

Today I pushed him into his new world.

Tears fall...

Sarah: I feel lucky to be able to provide for my family doing something that has so much potential to inspire and fulfil me. The downside is that I never have the luxury of just working on one project and demands and deadlines appear so thick and fast that I sometimes feel like a skittle in a bowling alley just scrambling up onto my feet again only to be knocked over again. I fantasise about sitting down and talking to my kids about their life, just sitting and concentrating, really having the time to understand how they are feeling.

Working creatively felt like a break from the day job, and being able to collaborate with other mothers in academia was a rare treat. Day after day though I would clear space mentally, emotionally and physically to enable a chunk of time but this was always eaten up by other things, a weeping student, a stressed colleague, traffic jams, and phone calls.

Predictably, most of this was written in the middle of the night when it was finally quiet enough to think. As a mother in academia, I have learned to survive on remarkably little sleep.

On the Pain of Motherhood

Becoming

My first child is finally born. I gaze at him and finally understand what I have been told again and again; that the love I will feel will be "like nothing I have ever known before". Four years later; a daughter. Her fist grips my finger. From this day on I will only be grateful.

Exhaustion

I have never known tiredness like this. I push the trolley up and down the aisles like a zombie while my son screams; "down, down, down!". He is toddling now and fully embracing his new-found freedom. I have secured him in the child-seat, where I can see him, keep him safe and in desperation have bribed him with a gingerbread man which I have not yet paid for. He does not like to be caged and arches his little back, tears of rage streaming down his face –

he is also tired. Soon he will sleep and I will have to work; writing if I can, cleaning the house if I can't. If I can't then I will have to write tonight, in between feeds, when the house is dark and quiet. It is the only time I will have.

Guilt

When the children arrive at nursery they must find the laminated label with their name on it and then blu-tac it to either the sunshine, the rainbow or the thunder cloud displayed by the door to signal to their key worker how they feel that morning. My daughter has chosen the thunder cloud again. She does not like nursery. She refuses to kiss me goodbye turning her back in silent, dignified remonstrance.

When I get to work I cry silently in the toilet cubicle. I have emergency mascara in my bag for these situations. I use it most days.

Shame

We are running late and my son does not want to hurry. I unsuccessfully endeavour to reason with him before resorting to various attempts at bribery

but he steadfastly rejects his pushchair as he has decided that he wants to walk. He toddles unsteadily and incredibly slowly, stopping often to gaze in wonder at his surroundings, bending his little knees to pick up a leaf or a conker turning it over and over in his small, chubby hands in studied contemplation.

He does not see the need for deadlines and timetables. Why should he? I have to deliver a lecture in less than an hour and must drop him off first at my mother's. She will remind me that I will be late yet again. The students will be waiting impatiently in the lecture theatre. I think they can tell that I'm not coping.

I swing my laptop bag, my workbag and the baby bag onto my back kneeling by the pushchair in the gravel, trying to manoeuvre my son into the seat before employing a desperate chopping motion to persuade him to bend in the middle. He is incensed and protests loudly. A stranger gawks in horror; disgusted. I attempt a conciliatory smile. "People like you do not deserve to be mothers" she observes. I suspect that she might be right.

Helen replied with an "I" poem¹ which disrupted my story to focus on my subjectivity, providing life affirming validation. To feel heard is such an important part of human experience.

*I gaze.
I feel.
I am primal.
I am a mother.
I can't.
I am.
I will.
I push.
I have.
I can.
I have not.
I will.
I can.*

¹A technique drawn from Gilligan's "listening guide" method (see, e.g., Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, & Bertsch, 2003).

I can't.
I can't.
I will.
I will.
I hear.
I pray.
I demand.
I believe.
I say.
I know.
I would die.
I love.
I am.
I hear.
I excuse.
I do not want.
I want.
I want.
I remember.
I have.
I get to work.
I cry.
I use.
I long.
I have given up.
I didn't.
I can't.
I have begged.
I unsuccessfully endeavour.
I have to deliver.
I'm not coping.
I swing.
I growl.
I attempt.

Louise made this response (see Fig. 2)...

And I identified with the fragments of negative thoughts depicted by the words on torn paper intertwined with the family pictures and



Fig. 2 Entwined by pains of motherhood

memories of beach holidays where I could finally spend time with my children unencumbered by cares.

Agli's response gave me a sense of understanding, a belonging to a group of mothers in academia who were travelling the same, well-trodden path.

To Becoming...

It is a sin to love...to feel...to be...

Courage flows, vibrate into this troubling world ... words against the machine,

I hear your cry ... "primal, fierce, a tigress" ... a roar ...you are a survivor, mother, wife...

To Exhaustion...

The labour of becoming...exhausting...their cries fill your ears...

Awakened, alive... tigers ...you strive... demanding the world take note...I feel your strength...you find the means to carve a pathway forward.

To Guilt...

A mother's guilt seems never ending...the machine...demands...but tears renew.

Your mask in place, you face the day... planning...building... yes, there is a cost...but cautiously... a reflexive movement finds the space to be...to play...to dream.

Louise: I greatly admire Helen, Sarah and Agli's poetic writing and really struggled to locate an uninterrupted patch of time to devote to writing my lived reality as a mother and academic. Not just any grab of time. I needed to feel clear and strong to be creative. I was stuck in the heavy fog of dark depression invoked by the lack of recognition and value of my work within a research-intensive sandstone university at the cost of parenting and self-care sacrifices. In time I eventually wrote, because I felt I was letting the beautiful mothers I had brought together down. I had a commitment to honour. I rawly wrote from 22 years of motherhood and 12 years of academia.

I started my PhD when my twins were 4 and my eldest 9.

I would make the most of when they were at kindergarten and school and asleep. The glow from the computer screen and tapping of keyboard permeated our bedroom into the wee hours of the morning. I wish I was sleeping too, but I have deadlines.² This word has pushed me a long for years.

I am imprisoned by these lines – they stop my spontaneity, and much needed rest and play. I adhere to deadlines with the same vigilance that I fear for my life. I used to be an early childhood teacher; I could play. When I talk about playing – one of my twins looks at me stunned: “you don't play”.

Towards the end of writing my thesis, I stole a Sunday to retreat to campus to rid the lead weight from our lives. The next day working at home on a laptop perched on a plank of wood between shelves in our bedroom, I glanced out the window at my elderly neighbour's house. I noticed multiple

²The first known use of “deadline” was in 1864 to infer “a line drawn within or around a prison that a prisoner passes at the risk of being shot” (Merriam Webster).

muddy splats alongside the outer wall of her house. I stared at the earthy prints, conjuring explanations of how they came to be.

When each family member returned home I asked them if they knew anything about the mud splats.

Sheepishly C & M revealed they were throwing mud balls.

Wild unruly children = product of neglectful mother.

The clouds of shame hung heavy. We went to make peace with our neighbour...

I succumbed to societal patterning and sent my children to school – the local public school for community. It is my greatest regret of parenthood. I raised my children to be free spirits to follow their interests. Foregrounding inquiry rather than disciplined didactic academic acquisition.

And so, each of my children became constructed as deficit learners by the schooling system.

Meeting after meeting

Assessment after assessment

Therapy after therapy

And no one showed any interest in the body of knowledge I possessed as an education academic.

My children loath/ed school and its chains that lingered (aka homework).

When I started at a research intensive University in 2012 I had the greatest number of dependent children and still do. The competition of performance pushed, slapped and forced me to work evenings and weekends to keep up. I then calculated my disadvantage – parenting was consuming 6 hours per day.

I learnt to just do and accept my circumstances. To cry and scream behind the locked door of my office after yet another school call imposing unjustified disciplinary action on one of my children. I've lost count how many times they have been suspended. I viscerally sense how my children have been constructed by teachers and administrators at their primary and secondary schools. I perpetually hear how family members and friends' children perform so well at school. And I perpetually hear in academic spaces that I am not good enough. And so, I declare that I have failed in both mothering and academia and I desperately long to put my sealskin on and swim far, far away, but the dead line holds me.

I felt failure in my writing, in my mothering and in being an academic. "...herein lies the dilemma for mothers in academia – we want to excel in both realms but there is no structural support for those goals" (Fothergill & Feltey, 2003, p. 17).

Failure is just another name for much of real life...Who set the bar so high that most of our attempts to sail gracefully over it on the viewless wings of Poesy end in an undignified scramble or a nasty fall into the mud? Who told us we had to succeed at any cost? (Atwood, 2013)

Failure is hidden, shamed and silently grieved in academia. Mud is reality. Mothering is muddy. By drawing from feminist ethics of care and its corresponding claim for slow scholarship (Mountz et al., 2015) through our slow-moving uncensored conversations, writing, and making, the raw, the hidden, the pain—the conflicts see daylight.

And so I came to see more in my writing and lived experiences as Helen, Sarah and Agli gifted to me their responses and I felt the soothing warmth of the relationality of thinking-with the dual identities of mother and academic in our collective.

Helen highlighted the resonant threads through "blackout" poetry³:

*I started asleep.
I have deadlines.
Pushed along for years
at the risk of being shot.
I am imprisoned.
Stop my rest,
I adhere to vigilance.
I used to be a child/Teacher –
I could play.*

*Towards the end
I stole a desk,
a plank of wood,*

³Often associated with the Beat Generation.

*conjuring explanations,
throwing mud balls -
Wild unruly children,
clouds of shame.*

I succumbed.

*My greatest regret
foregrounding didactic academic acquisition,
so my children
became constructed as deficit learners*

*Meeting, after assessment,
after therapy,
no one showed any interest
in the body I possess,
chains that linger.*

*Still the competition of performance
pushed, slapped
and forced me to keep up,
calculated my disadvantage –
just do,
accept,
cry and scream behind locked doors,
after yet another disciplinary action,
suspended viscerally.*

*I am not good enough.
I have failed to swim.
The dead line holds me.*

Sarah dissected, distilled and listed to foreground key drivers of my colliding identities of mother and academic (Fig. 3).

Agli witnessed and held my pain and suffering. Empathising, seeing my gifts and offering (re)visioned hope:

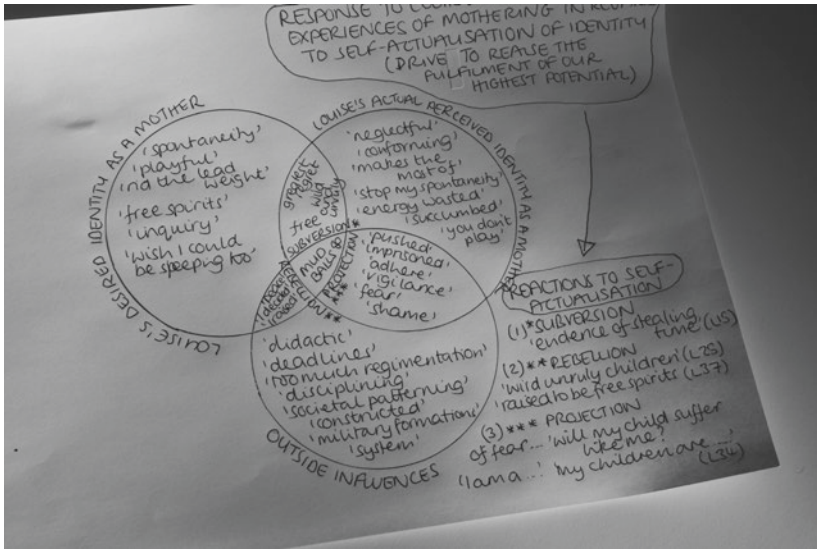


Fig. 3 Sarah's response to Louise's writing

Your words touch deeply... You set fire to me and give me life

Deadlines. A word not of your making...and the prison it shapes around you. I see you pulling at the bars hoping to set yourself free. ...what are you looking for my darling friend...I admire your industry.

Your words...vessels filled with pain.

I see you looking outward...reaching for hope... I cry out to you... does she hear my words... are the deadlines so entrenched.

Motherhood is wisdom... wisdom forged in moments of trouble, tension, conflict and pain

I see your knowing gaze...I see you on your path...

Mud pies mark your pathway...playfulness is your way

They laugh...do you hear them...they invite you to laugh too at this crazy world.

I see the mud ball in your hand...take aim dear friend..one, two, three...

Mother, teacher, activist...transforming redefining...showing the way through your storying.

Deadlines form around all of us. Neoliberalism chomping at our bodies, hearts and minds.

Motherhood imprisoned...the academe... neoliberal deadlines defining good and bad.

Your valued question...but how do you not fold. Motherhood redefined as you forge onward.

Not good enough!!!

Who defines 'not good enough'?

Who sets out the ruler for being woman...mother...academic... human? The ruler skirt I wear.

I see you putting on your sealskin, I see you swimming deeper into the unknown...your power is internal.

I hear your roar, you turn...you say...

Agli: Academic work, in the ethnographic, auto-ethnographic and critical auto-ethnographic space, brings to the surface tensions, challenges and opportunities that call forward action. Not an automaton, I wrote as a person, mother and academic free from institutional constraints. Working from a feminist post-structural perspective (St Pierre & Pillow, 2000), I embraced social constructivist grounded theory as an iterative and mindful method that acknowledges multiple truths (Charmaz, 2006) and allowed me to acknowledge and work through my own bias and see my perspectives as “one view among many” (p. 54).

As an intersex person, embracing the role of mother, working within the academic space as “the other”, and developing a mindful praxis, I wrote with freedom, seeking to express and trouble “foundational ontologies, methodologies, and epistemologies” (St Pierre & Pillow, 2000, p. 2). I wrote as an expression of care supported by the work of Held (2005), Noddings (2003) and Gilligan (1993), who have created spaces for thinking and writing authentically. I drew on embodied, felt and

ecological ways of knowing in poetic reflexivity about the intersecting themes that emerged from my lived experience.

***Fractured tales ... of academe, of parenthood, of trauma, of us.
Of Academe,***

...awake, i hold the shield high (forged from lived experience of – war, migration, pathologisation of my body)...facing the tension of the day begins,

... i waited for you to reveal yourself, friend or foe in a game with shifting rules subject to one's sex marker – flm...

...being intersex...I feel I am neither...is being me a problem.

...i shield my soul – figuring out the rules for being, belonging and becoming... in this tango, moving with the push and pull...a tension...endured...

...survival is holding the tension, not breaking...

...tears burn, the view obstructed...

Academe is at times a heartless master – Darwinian in its philosophy, its 24/7 clock ticks on, setting the beat.

Of parenthood...

Coming into mother...re-imagining...re-defining...storylines form – footwork along a path with heart – exhausted, the body yields...hopes of being, belonging and becoming animate soul-work...wholeheartedness defined

...the ground shifts, lava beneath my feet, threatening to consume...

...will I burn. i feel my body tensing...

...in flow – my creativity blossoms, fruitful and nurturing...

Of us...

...imprinted...

...always there...

...mummy...

*...it cuts the chaos of my thoughts...
 ...yes darling, how can i help...
 ...mummy, i need...*

Children's need for 'mother' is intense, all consuming. Academe has had to wait.⁴ But like a hungry lover it pulls at me – as I am pulled away.

Of parenthood (cont.)...

*...defining my being – driving and motivating me...
 ...i chose them,
 ...their needs immediate, loud, interrupting...
 ...together we've struggled...you had no place for me...you said...you made me choose...
 ...i dance with them, we roll – in our rhythmic pull and push,*

I hold my breath – storied lives, ponds of tears – creeks to rivers out to sea and back to shore.

Of trauma...

*... claws upon me...sculpting my being...
 ...my body yields... I connect to their need for 'mother'...
 ...our tango – our beat..
 ...falling, falling, falling.....sweat mixed with tears becomes the sea from which I awaken...skin thickened.*

My love affair with academe, another war of sorts...shapes and defines...what of me...my work... a 46XY Swyers body – fractured – scattered – anesthetised – awakened – I drifted, greyed and weathered – I landed on this shore.

⁴Agli has had two one-year breaks from academe (after graduating with her Ph.D. at the age of 39) as well as periods of choosing not to work or work part time or has taken up sessional work. This has been in order to take care of their children due to the trauma experienced as adopted children as a result of disrupted attachment. See, <http://www.socialworkerstoolbox.com/lets-learn-together-guide-parents-teachers-adopted-children-primary-school/>.

*Of us again...**...mum can we read...**...yes darling – putting my pyjamas on...**...i hear movement – the eldest settling – just turned 12...**...we read – cuddled on my bed – I breathe...*

Sarah's thoughtful gift brought insight, re-framing a fractured tale as three interconnected re-presentations of self-hood—in its process of being, belonging and becoming:

Survival:

*Transforming, shaping, I battle to birth myself: being, belonging, becoming.
Finally awakening, I land weakened and weathered on this shore.*

*Hypervigilant still, but gradually finding flow, I fight, my shield held high,
to make the most of so much potential. Determined to reveal myself without
shame despite your endlessly shifting game-rules.*

*My love affair with the heartless continues through my work. I long to belong
here.*

Salvation:

*You have imprinted. I am struggling, exhausted, threatened, challenged like
you and by you. Intensely nurturing your all-consuming needs defines my
existence and makes me. I become mother.*

We have chosen one another. We belong.

Louise's evocative sculptured gifted response (see Fig. 4) is provocative and enables a re-imagining of what it could be to be intersex and feminine, giving flight to feminine creativity like motherhood.



Fig. 4 (Re)creating/(re)birthing mothering

From Helen, I received a gift, in the form of a letter, an act of active reading and reflecting back to me a compassionate knowing of me and the relationship between self and other.

Dear Agli,

I met you through your words, and know that you are beautiful. Pressure-cast like shattered glass, pounded into gemstones by the sea. Your 'not normal' iridescently-interred beneath a thousand dusty pebbles. You are beautiful in your becoming. You will not be consumed.

I hear your trauma too, carried in the throats of hungry gulls, the anger of the ocean; its desolation. In the tension of water, breaking onto rocks, I taste salt tears you can never wash away, tracing something of my story in those scars.

There will be time to sleep, to lay our towels in sandy hollows. But for now, we know no rest, only omnipresent vigilance, as we crayon our complexities of being.

On receiving these, bonds of sisterhood were woven into the fabric of our being, as we each felt each other's pain, struggle, joy and madness. The process for me, the weaving of ourselves together with poetry and creativity, creates a movement beyond us to embrace our readers.

Gifting: Responding to Each Other

Reading each others' stories built kinship and alliances of motherhood in academia, as we thought and felt with each other (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012). Drawing from feminist methodologies, we wrote and made from our bodies that were offered as a gift that "enables the other rather than appropriating the other's difference in order to construct and glorify the self through rigorous and masterful knowledge" (Phillips, Pullen, & Rhodes, 2014, p. 324). Shifting away from masculinised academic language such as dissemination, in which academics "sow their seeds", we collectively birth and nurture ideas, thoughts, provocations, inspirations, feelings and the becoming-human (Fotaki, Metcalfe, & Harding, 2014). By responding to each others' personal writing on being both mothers and academics, we hold a relational space for creation, writing and sharing, thoughtful heartfelt gifts giving birth to understanding. Our gifted responses are each an act to touch the other. "All touching entails an infinite alterity, so that touching the other is touching all others, including the 'self', and touching the 'self' entails touching the strangers within" (Barad, 2012, p. 7).

In responding to each other's mothering writing, we listened and held and crafted what we were invited to sense, bringing to the fore what was most resonant, sharing elements of alignment and making visible what perhaps our sister could not, in that moment, see. These are customised gifts to each other, dedicated to one mother but resonating with many mothers. Carefully selected, materials and words were gifted. We moved beyond the standardised, faceless observations of lived experience (Code, 1993), gifting to each other our stories as subversive embodied

acts (Butler, 2006). What emerged were poetic forms seeking to raise awareness of the personal, spiritual, political and global issues (Held, 2005) facing mothers working within academic spaces. We gave gifts with compassion and received gifts with openness and learning.

Collective Making

We then collated our gifts with our personal writing to form “multiple trajectories representing different times in our lives” (Mountz et al., 2015, p. 1239) recognising that our stories were not singular stories, but were held, felt and experienced by each other. Caring for, thinking-with (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012) and weaving with each other’s work, we, like the Great Lakes Feminist Geography Collective, “attend to the interpersonal and collective conditions that underpin knowledge production conducted with care” (Mountz et al., p. 1254). In a way our work adopts a feminist collective biography approach (e.g., see Davies & Gannon, 2006) welcoming creativity, mixed modes and sensuality to “have effects, produce realignments, shake things up” (Grosz, 1995, p. 127) by merging our writing/making and insight.

Helen: My final piece shows the original poetic autoethnography held, with hands and heart, by my three co-authors (see Fig. 5). This represents both the echoing of recurrent themes over different hemispheres, careers and spans of mother/child-hood, and the love, support and self-affirmation which the sharing of our narratives birthed. These themes resound throughout explorations of motherhood and academia (see, e.g., Isgro & Castañeda, 2015; Trafi-Prats, 2018), speaking of: time stretched to breaking point; exhaustion and energy; feelings of failure and guilt; and the almost irreconcilable conflict between a mother’s open, warm love and the blinkered displacement of work lives. Combining our voices in this way contests the model of knowledge *seeking* as an isolated, competitive, practice aimed at producing a fixed, singular product and emphasises instead knowledge *creation* as communal, interactive and dynamic processes. Thus, we resist an individualised form of knowledge, seeking to think within a network of relations (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012).

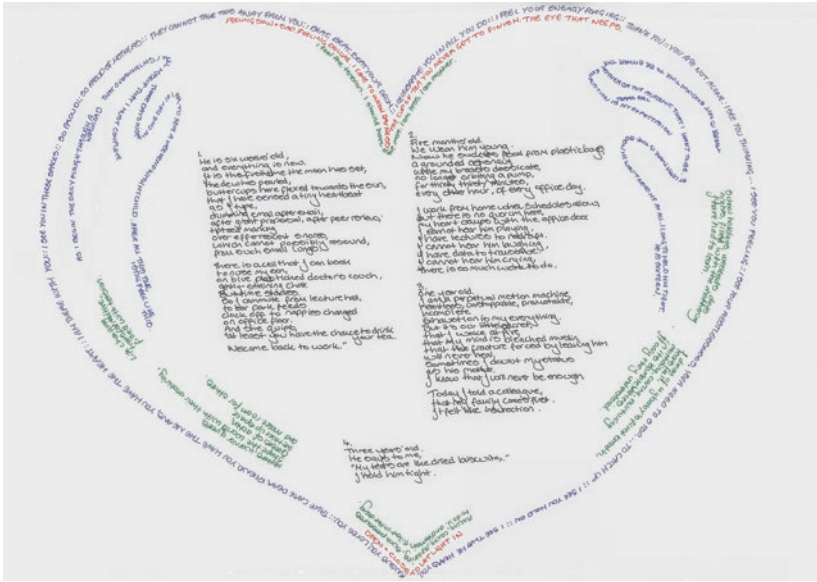


Fig. 5 Tea break embrace

Louise: Sarah’s gifted response placed mud balls at the centre, they were the catalyst for much of my mothering identity. When my boys were primary school age, I often shared that it was like living in *Lord of the Flies*. Agli nudged me to take the mud ball in my own hand and take aim. So I did. “Matter: the Mud: the Mother. She transforms herself” (Sjöo & Mor, 1987, p. 51). I made mud, I held and shaped it in my hands. And branded the conflicting intentions (that Sarah highlighted) on my wrist: rebellion, subversion and protection. I found my strength. Helen’s “blackout” poem of my original piece highlighted the weight of mothering in unloving institutions circumnavigating my mudladen fist. Agli’s knowing witnessing of my life speaks to me from all directions (see Fig. 6). These gifts help me to own my strength as mother and academic, fading my failings.

I am imprisoned by these lines - they stop my spontaneity, and much needed rest and play. I adhere to deadlines with the same vigilance that I fear for my life...



And I perpetually hear in academic spaces that I am not good enough. And so, I declare that I have failed in both mothering and academia and I desperately long to put my sealskin on and swim far, far away, but the dead line holds me.

Fig. 6 Mud mattering of mothering

Agli: I embraced the metaphor of journey early in my academic work (Zavros, 2009), which I now add to including my lived experience as mother. Journeying (see Fig. 7) brings together the wisdom I have gained from our collaboration. Louise’s clay Yoni, (ancient symbol of femaleness and fertility) along with Sarah’s insightful reframing and Helen’s compassionate words that remind me of my resilience, informed my re-imagining, making and writing.

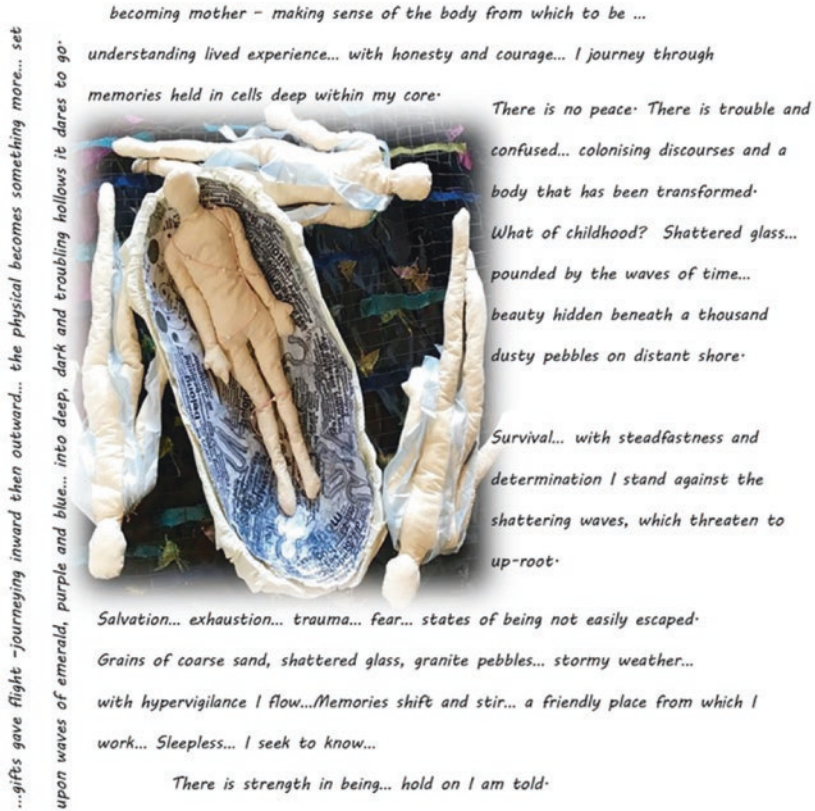


Fig. 7 Journeying

Journeying (four hand made fabric dolls, a vessel made of paper mache set upon a dark ocean) represents compassion and wisdom—reflective of our interactions and dialogue. I set one of the figures in the vessel (wrapped with a string of pearls)—the other three outside the vessel, afford them rest and safe passage. Restorative wisdom gained from making and storying—the string of pearls—enables the journeying onward into uncharted waters.

Sarah: Each gift helped me to understand mothering in a different way. My response (see Fig. 8) depicts the loneliness of being a mother in the



Fig. 8 Working late

academy and our collective experience of ongoing incessant glued-to-the-computer work. I am often too overwhelmed by emails to leave the office and seek the connections that I crave preferring instead to “keep calm and carry on” to get home to my children. Yet, I need those connections and this work has shown me that there is sisterhood and understanding to be found. We came together as four mothers from different parts of the world and different backgrounds to provide that connection and to give each other some much-needed strength to carry on.

Departing Words

The academy is a patriarchal construction, which follows the patriarchal belief that all of life is created for men to use. As mothers, creators and sustainers of life, we create, we support, we hold, we gift, we care, we feed...We are there in the mud of real life, with the trouble, with the relationality of trouble and care (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012).

Developing our methodology of gifting is offered as a shift in perspective. It is a move towards “differentiated comprehensive, and reflective forms of thought [that] appears in women’s responses to both actual and hypothetical dilemmas” (Gilligan, 1993, p. 73). The process of developing a new methodology, one that is organic, holistic and liberatory—that includes creative writing, sharing our writing within our epistemic community and responding through “gifting” and “receiving of gifts” from which we then collated new work—becomes our reflexive praxis as mothers in academia, through conversation over virtual spaces that define twenty-first-century academic work. From the outset, we worked through a common desire to build care, trust, mutual consideration and solidarity (Held, 2005). This is central to this methodology. This process of listening and holding each other’s mothering stories and creating carefully composed gifted responses produced treasures and time to savour and comfort—a much-welcomed reprieve from the academic machine. Drawing from “a feminist inspired vision of caring...in vital ethico-affective everyday practical doings that engage with the inescapable troubles of interdependent existences” (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012, p. 199), we gift this idea to you dear readers as a panacea for the cold harsh culture of academia, and as a call for a widespread rippled action of acknowledging one another (including all the invisible others that make our work possible), and appreciating how our work relies on one another.

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Creating Spaces of Feminine Possibilities in the Academy

Sandy Farquhar and Justine O'Hara-Gregan

Introduction

Our backgrounds in early childhood education and care (ECEC) and our roles as mothers have simultaneously enabled and constrained our journeys into and within academia. Scholarship in ECEC has provided us entry into academia, and our roles as mothers and early childhood teachers have validated our knowledge and expertise in this area. However, the historic conflation of early childhood teaching with mothering as a natural and instinctive way of behaving continues to impact on the status of the ECEC profession in society (Kane, 2008)

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and within the academy. The romanticised ideal of the mother-teacher fails to recognise the intellectual and emotional complexity of ECEC, endorsing its historical positioning as the poor relation within the university.

For early childhood teachers habituated to working collegially in a highly feminised workforce with distributed leadership structures, transitioning into the neoliberal university with its patriarchal hierarchy presents significant and ongoing challenges to personal integrity and authentic ways of being. The early childhood sector in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Aotearoa) has a long history of activism and advocacy for the rights of children, women, families and ECEC providers (May, 2007). Gains made in these areas have come as a result of a unified, collaborative approach. For ECEC services a collaborative team approach is the norm. Kane's (2008) research identified that the particular nature of early childhood centres requires teachers to work very closely with each other at all times.

Early childhood teachers have a willingness and ability to work in harmony with others, and to be flexible... There was a sense from the interview data that collegiality was considered a more important attribute within the early childhood than in the data of the primary and secondary teachers. (p. 29)

The ECEC academics we work with continue to embrace this tradition of collective collegiality. Unlike some faculties, in which academics transition from undergraduate and postgraduate studies into an academic career, most ECEC academics in our faculty come from an extensive career in teaching young children. We bring with us a rich history of working in highly feminised environments that are dependent on teachers' emotional labour. Early childhood teachers also work in close physical proximity with children and with other teachers. Their work is collaborative in both a physical and emotional sense, and like many other professions, ECEC teachers have their own group-speak—a shared language and collective understanding about their work. These understandings emerge from intimate, emotional, collaborative and facilitative engagement. As we have moved into the academy, our social

history and professional responsibility have come with us. We comprise a community within the wider faculty, with a collective strength despite the ever-pressing individualism of the neoliberal university. Our collective histories of emotional labour are part of our stories that we continue to build out of desire for community, and out of necessity—in order to be heard.

While we recognise our histories as different from those of many academics, we believe our stories and experiences will resonate with those trying to balance an academic career with familial and domestic obligations, those trying to ‘fit in’ to existing structures within the university while being positioned as ‘other’ (Evans & Grant, 2008; Schlehofer, 2012). As educated Pākehā¹ professionals, we are aware of our relative privilege, even though our sense of otherness as women, as mothers and as ECEC teachers has persisted throughout our time in the university.

In contributing to the conversation about mothering in academia, we bring together our personal contemplative practices² and our lives as academics in an effort to conceptualise a more responsive university. Contemplative practices that engage the physical, spiritual and emotional body are embedded in both of our lives and underpin our desire for authentic, relational and creative meaning. Practices we regularly engage in include meditation, mindful self-compassion, journaling, yoga, walking and dance. We have, however, hidden these practices from public view most of our lives and, until quite recently, kept them separate from our academic practice. This subterfuge is the nub of this chapter: the personal-political challenges that have developed as we negotiate an authentic engagement in the academy.

Our approach to this chapter is subjective, narrative and collaborative. We have both engaged extensively with narrative theory and inquiries: Justine through her Masters study (O’Hara-Gregan, 2013)—a narrative inquiry into early childhood teacher authenticity and professionalism; Sandy through her work in narrative identity (Farquhar, 2010) and duoethnography (Fitzpatrick & Farquhar, 2018). The chapter begins with a discussion on meditation and method.

Meditation and Experimentation in Method

Our methods emerged through engagement with contemplative practices, conversation, journaling and shared writing. Contemplative practices anchor and consolidate a process of inquiry into our work:

Sandy: As I begin each day, I take a body reading that decides my practice for the morning, which may include meditation, asana, walking and running. Within each of these practices, I register the qualities of my breath, the strengths and weakness in my body and the clarity of thought – including the anxieties, disquiet and the calmness. I've learned to inquire with interest – to feel the currents – and it is from these early morning practices that I develop daily work streams: Intention emerges from the rhythm of this daily reading and calibrates the day.

Justine: Through the process of being with my breath, dropping into my body and simply noticing my thoughts during my meditation, dance, walking and yoga practices, I feel I create a space for ideas to emerge and crystallise without needing to grasp onto them. The articulation of these ideas then comes during my journaling practice or in my daily work. I am no longer afraid of 'losing' the thoughts that float in and out of my consciousness during my contemplative practices, because I know they will (more often than not) reappear at the appropriate time.

Zajonc (2009) discusses how 'contemplative practice not only changes who we are but also how we act in the world' (p. 207). Our contemplative practices have shifted the ways in which we are present with others and in the world. We are more secure in our authentic selves, while being more open to diversity and difference—to listening deeply to the views and experiences of others. These contemplative practices—yoga, meditation and walking—have been with us for much of our lives. In this chapter, we acknowledge that we have kept these practices hidden—out of sight—partly because they are deeply personal practices and partly because there has been limited space for their existence within the academy—until now! From our contemplative practices, our shared conversations and writings around embracing and championing notions of motherhood and the feminine within the patriarchal

university emerged common refrains which we developed to frame this chapter: the university machine, (in) authenticity, interruptions and spaces of new possibilities for the feminine in academia. The first of these refrains arises from our concern with the harnessing of academics by the neoliberal machine—with mechanising the feminine. And yet, we acknowledge the creative potential that may be released through our engagement with mechanisation.

The University Machine

The impact of neoliberalism on women and minority groups has been well documented. Davies, Browne, Gannon, Honan, and Sommerville (2005) characterise neoliberalism as the rise of management, surveillance and control. They suggest that universities have been restructured, knowledge broken up and administrators provided with greater powers. A new panopticism operates invisibly with ‘eyes whose gazes are finely tuned to the inflow and outflow of funding and to the multitude of mechanisms that have been generated to manipulate those flows’ (pp. 344–345). Although some women have succeeded within the academy, we argue that there are many invisible losses along the way too. Worldwide, women hold less than 50% of academic positions and only around 15–20% of the senior academic positions (Grove, 2013). Here at The University of Auckland, women hold close to half (45%) of academic positions, which is encouraging. However, women still occupy only 29% of *senior* positions (Le Fevre & Farquhar, 2016; Tautika, 2014). Clearly, the patriarchy still needs to be interrupted.

As we wrote this chapter, watching the clock and trying to submit within the agreed time, we were landed with an impossible project deadline within our university—with no extra time or resource. Being saddled with an urgent but unrealistic deadline is emblematic of the academy that exacts ‘an isolating and physical toll that is neither reasonable nor sustainable’ (Mountz et al., 2015, p. 1237). The feminist motivations for this book took on a special meaning for us as we worked alongside our ECEC colleagues (mainly women) to bring the university project to a fruitful conclusion, while juggling teaching,

research, writing, service and that not insignificant sphere—family life. Ball (2003) likens the academy to a beast creating a performative terror among academics—its purpose monstrous and counterproductive. While there may be economic benefits in ‘mechanising’ the feminine, there is an ongoing cost of this in both financial and human terms. The harnessing of human energy for productivity needs to be rethought in terms of the potential for accompanying damage and waste.

Justine: Richard White (1996) uses the term ‘organic machine’ to articulate the interactions between humans and nature. White observes that in harnessing the energy and resources of the Columbia River and its organic systems, humans have increased their access to power and irrigation, leading to economic growth and higher standards of living. At the same time, irreparable damage has been caused to natural systems through toxic waste creation, not just in the immediate vicinity of the Columbia River but in wider organic systems, the clean-up of which has cost billions of dollars and is having ongoing implications for the future health of the organic systems ... I’ve been reflecting on this vein of thought and now have a recurring image of a green vine growing up around a machine – unobtrusive at first and on the exterior, but as it gets larger it sends tendrils into the workings of the machine. Some of these tendrils will get squashed and damaged, but over time there are sufficient tendrils wending together in and around the cogs of the machine to start to cause an interruption to its workings – the machine rattling and clanking, buffing and puffing, smoking, before finally grinding to a halt. Not quite sure what happens after this – some weedkiller to get rid of the inconvenient organism, perhaps? Or is it possible for the organic and the machinic to co-exist?

In using White’s image of the organic machine—positioning it at the intersection between the university machine and the organic feminine—we create a space in which to consider further what the benefits and costs may be to all those involved. Precedents exist for the creative possibilities of machines in Western literature, particularly science fiction, where human existence may be enhanced, by harmonising and synchronising with machines, rather than being harnessed by them.

Sandy: There are some curious organic machines to learn from in fiction and science fiction. I'm thinking of Shelley's Creature in Frankenstein who takes on human qualities – an assemblage interrupting the idea of machinic consistency; then there are the replicants in Blade Runner who show more empathy and humanity than the humans; and, of course, the Tin man's journey in the Wizard of Oz is an enduring story of a search for a heart – for humanity. All of these fictional mainly masculine figures possess either characteristics or quests associated with the feminine: a desire for nurturing nourishment and a valuing of vulnerability. Their stories are non-human meta-journeys or quests to find knowledge, requiring in turn the development of empathy and connection – qualities often associated with humans. Each of these creatures long to be in some way human but humanity has denied them heart and voice – they are non-beings without identity and can only be granted agency with the support of humans. As minorities they understand – more than the humans – the significance of existence. They demonstrate, I think, the need for humans to learn to be with machines.

These cautionary fictional tales point out the dangers of technology without ethical responsibility. Blade Runner's replicants provide a salutary analogy to the university about the dangers of machinery harnessed by bureaucracy and organisation. Scaravelli (2017, p. 68) tells us to be careful about organisations, they 'kill work'. She argues instead that we must find love in everything, that love is everything, but that 'if you confine it, enclose it in a box or in a definite place, it disappearsit is the end'. It is quite a radical concept—to let go of bureaucracy, to embrace love as a defining concept for the modern university and probably not something that would be envisaged by a university council for inclusion in its mission statement. Discussing Readings' (1996) seminal book, *The University in Ruins*, Peters (2010, p. 160) suggests a way forward for the academy. It involves creating 'a university based on open systems', in order to preserve 'the best of the past and yet open to new forms of the post-colonial university'. Our own experiences suggest that change is possible within the university. Feminine ways of knowing and being can be introduced and sustained—but that requires courage and courage requires vulnerability.

(In)Authenticity

The ability to be open and authentic and to 'take a stand' among the demands of the university is encapsulated in the following compilation of our conversations and shared writing on forbidden spaces and subjugated knowledge. The process of writing and editing this dialogue has led us to theorise our early experiences as younger women rattling on the doors of taboo patriarchal spaces while simultaneously feeling fraudulent and/or inauthentic.

***Justine:** Making the transition into the university, first as a student and later as an academic, was challenging ... as the first person in my family to attend university, I had a sense of stepping into a previously 'forbidden' space. I had an unarticulated fear that I would at some point be exposed as a fraud and an imposter. Despite the rhetoric of the 1980s that 'girls can do anything', the subtext for me was still '... that men allow them to do'. It is somewhat ironic that, although I was successful as a university student and 'proved' that I had the credentials to belong, my entry into academic teaching also felt fraudulent.*

My first academic teaching role came about when I was asked by a former lecturer to bring my newborn son into teach infant care practices to ECEC student teachers. In this particular instance, being a mother gave me an entry into the academy that I might not otherwise have had. Having said that, subsequent offers of academic teaching were contingent upon my being able to fit in with university expectations. Part-time, short-term contract roles gave me time and space to be with my young family, but also presented challenges in meeting the university requirements for promotion.

***Sandy:** I connect to some of your story Justine ... years ago, when I wanted to discuss thesis options – one professor told me that 'this was a Faculty of Education' – it didn't 'do early childhood' as ECEC is care not education! I was gobsmacked – it was like I had committed a deadly sin in a hallowed church. Attitudes have changed a bit now but it is still tricky to be authentic when you cannot even claim a space. So the first task has been to make visible connections to what exists, so that others may better understand what we do and hopefully welcome us in. This often means finding creative ways to be part of the conversation on offer, to sometimes fit in rather than expecting others to fit around us.*

I do think there is now more understanding of ECEC within the scholarship of education, but it is still an outlier in terms of society and government policy where the focus is on the compulsory and tertiary sectors. This is reflected in student teachers' talk too: we frequently hear them report back on situations where they are not regarded as 'real teachers' because the perception is that all they do is change nappies. It is a real challenge – and a very sad one for the increasing number of infants and young children that are attending child care. I believe that in some ways the inequities for this highly feminised profession have not improved much from the days when women working in child care were among the lowest paid in country. Some aspects may have changed and improved but we still have to work hard to be visible and to create spaces for ECEC within society, government policy as well as within university scholarship and practice.

We have both led dual lives within the university. On the one hand, attending to our early childhood collective code has meant it would be almost heresy not to talk about care, belonging, passion and love. On the other hand, the individualist academic code has no place for these practices, for empathy or even, sometimes, for basic human kindness. Finding voice, traction and places of belonging is hard in many organisations, but more so where there is rhetoric of openness. We have sometimes felt like frauds turning ourselves inside out to fit in and, at times, have ended up working in a subterranean way.

The word 'authenticity' in everyday usage carries connotations of 'realness' and 'genuineness' (Kreber, 2013; Robbins, 2009). Historically, the humanist tradition viewed authenticity as crucial to the development of a fully functioning, self-actualised person (Gillath, Sesko, Shaver, & Chun, 2010). Positive psychology also articulates the value and role of authenticity in well-being, allowing one to be 'most fully human and most fully and uniquely oneself' (Adams, 2006, p. 10). Erickson (1995) proposes that, while the concept of authenticity assumes the existence of a trans-situational and somewhat stable aspect of self, it is not reducible to it. Such a perspective fits with feminist (Weiner, 2006) and critical perceptions (Bracher, 2006) of the self as socially constructed.

Brené Brown (2010, p. 49) does not see authenticity as something we either have or don't have. 'It's a practice — a conscious choice of how

we want to live ... It's the choice to show up and be real. The choice to be honest. The choice to let our true selves be seen'. Understanding authenticity as a practice (something that we repeat over and over again in order develop and maintain it) aligns well with the contemplative practices that we each engage in on a regular basis as part of nurturing and maintaining our well-being. Choosing to be authentic in our lives as academics, women, mothers and contemplative practitioners is not always easy. It means 'cultivating the courage to be imperfect, to set boundaries, and to allow ourselves to be vulnerable' (Brown, 2010, p. 50). It does, however, enable us to live with integrity at the crossroads of our academic and personal lives, and to be what Meyerson (2001) calls 'tempered radicals'—women who quietly get the work done but who also work to create an agenda for change.

Sandy: And I do think that many of us in ECEC are comfortable with the facilitative social glue type roles – roles within the academy that are invaluable – often roles that women take on which are immeasurable and uncountable and therefore considered irrelevant. You have to work creatively so as not to be stuck with them, yet they are roles that one personally values too.

Meyerson suggests that tempered radicals face two primary sets of challenges: 'those related to the preservation of their "selves" and those that involve advancing an agenda for change from within' (Meyerson, 2001, p. 11). Tempered radicals are a very apt metaphor for the women who have led ECEC in Aotearoa since the 1980s. Women who have quietly (sometimes not so quietly) and staunchly followed the path less travelled, so to speak, carved pathways into the academy and in so doing, interrupted the relentless university machine, to create new and hospitable spaces for women and children.

Interruptions

An interruption is defined as 'a break in the continuity of something' or 'something that causes a stoppage or break in the continuity of something' ('interruption', n.d.). Our conversations about existence as part

of the neoliberal university have highlighted how we experience interruptions to our individual ways of being and authenticity. Equally, however, there are times when we *are* the interruption, the spoke in one of the many wheels of the university machine. Our contemplative practices have helped us to develop a greater awareness of moments of personal interruption as they have occurred during our time within the university. Dawney (2013) argues that interruptions are momentary and physical, and that through disruption of habitual ways of being, we become more consciously aware:

...we experience a general unease, a jolt, a sense of the untimely, or when we retch with disgust but do not know why we might react so strongly, when we react unthinkingly but then check ourselves, can tell us much about the way in which our bodies are thoroughly constituted through the social, how our muscular development, our digestive systems, and our neural pathways are always imbricated in the social and, moreover, that they themselves instantiate and perform the social. (Dawney, 2013, p. 637)

We both recall instances within the university when we have experienced this physical disruption and change in our flow of experience that provided us with the opportunity to take stock and interrogate our embodied responses. These interruptions have often occurred in response to being 'othered' or feeling inauthentic.

***Justine:** When my youngest child was two years old I was offered the opportunity to take on a larger teaching role and workload within the university. With a family of four young children it was a financially appealing option and the role did offer some flexibility in terms of being able to work online - but also involved travelling on a regular basis. I was excited and flattered at being offered the role, but almost immediately after I accepted, I became aware of an intensification of the nervous energy in my body, a shift from butterflies in my stomach to a flock of seagulls and a contraction in my chest making it more difficult to breathe.*

Despite my cognitive rationalisation that taking on a new teaching role was a 'good' thing to do, my body was clearly sending an alternative 'interrupting' response. One of my core values as a parent is to be present to, and for, my children - particularly in their early childhood years. In taking on a teaching

role that required me to work longer hours and travel away from home I was compromising my values and my body began to give me immediate signals that I was being inauthentic. Fortunately, my Head of School was understanding and supportive when I declined the role 24 hours after accepting, and I was able to continue working at the University in a capacity that enabled me to balance my commitment to my family along with teaching work.

In addition to experiencing interruptions, over our time within the university we have also been a source of interruption.

***Sandy:** Other faculty frequently comment on the collective approach we take in ECEC. It is something that we take for granted. It's not like we all agree – we have tensions and interpersonal challenges but there is collective women's history that draws us together. Take the recent project when it was decided that by university leadership that we would work as individuals to achieve particular outcomes. We collectivised and said, 'Oh no that won't work, we don't work that way'. You know, we're [the ECEC team] not even in the same departments or physical location and there are long periods of time when our paths don't cross, but our team are highly attuned to needing to advocate and act together in solidarity. Much of it is unseen work – it has to be done, but it's not accounted for in our workloads.*

Our very presence as ECEC practitioners within the university and our quiet insistence on working together as a collaborative ECEC team across schools within our faculty has created interruptions, polite disruptions and a stutter in the narrative of the university. Our national ECEC curriculum *Tē Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017), with its core principles of whakamana (empowerment), kotahitanga (holistic development), whānau tangata (family and community) and ngā hononga (relationships), underpins and informs our ways of being as ECEC academics, and simultaneously challenges the neoliberal ideals of individualism, performativity and compliance. Although we take solace in community, we also recognise the invisibility of this work and the additional organisation it can take to bring people together. Winter and Sarros (2002), researching whether the academic work environments in Australian universities were motivating places to work, recommended that

to reduce stress and increase staff commitment at lecturer levels, university leaders need to make a concerted effort to recognise and reward the wide range of roles and tasks staff undertake at work ... more flexible criteria for promotion is needed to reflect actual work activities rather than an idealised “checklist” of what academics should do to be effective. (p. 255)

Our experiences within a university in Aotearoa, almost twenty years after this recommendation, suggest there is still work to be done. There is an ongoing need to interrupt the university machine if the characteristics of the organic feminine are to be recognised and supported to thrive.

An interruption can also be a pause, a moment of stillness. It is in these moments of interruption that our contemplative practices enhance our integrity, integration and authenticity; we find ourselves more willing/able to slow down, to delve more deeply into our work and research and to use our own stillness as a space of quiet resistance, of questioning and of engagement with a feminist ethics of care. It is through interruptions and moments of stillness that spaces of possibility emerge.

Spaces of Possibility

The feminist wave of the 1980s–1990s renewed interest in spatial metaphors, with increasing reference to spatial and geographical theory, cultural studies, critical theory, philosophy, politics and aesthetics. Moving away from binary thinking allows for a focus on complex in-between spaces. Ulmer (2017, p. 380) refers to heterotopic spaces as liminal spaces of possibility where ‘something different’ is not only possible, but foundational for the defining of revolutionary trajectories. This ‘something different’ does not necessarily arise out of a conscious plan, but more simply out of what people do, feel, sense and come to articulate as they seek meaning in their daily lives. Heterotopias—contingent formulations of ambiguity and discontinuity—interrupt everyday existence. They are at once out of step and in step, existing in

a range of variations, intensities and reverberating combinations. Thus, heterotopic spaces comprise complex fluid transitions, movable borders and thresholds, and raise questions of liminality—boundaries between spatial areas or time. Liminality entails ambiguity and otherness, and heterotopia is by definition the place of otherness. Such practices create a multiplicity of heterotopic spaces, generating new possibilities.

In one of our conversations, we began to discuss the ECEC curriculum and how that provides a ready platform for ways of thinking that centre around ecological, sustainable, contemplative research and teaching. O'Neill (2014, n.p.) asks: 'Can an engagement with the idea of slow in relation to the university help us to think against the grain, engage in dialectical and creative thinking and unmask the reified consciousness at play in the social construction of the machinic university today?' The collective call from Mountz et al. (2015), for a slow ontology, in which one moves deliberately through a fast world, provides a manifesto for slow scholarship in the academy and is the kind of feminine resistance we are curious about. They express concern with the 'punishing' and 'ever-increasing demands ... larger classes ... innumerable university administrative committees... quarterly updates ... annual reviews' and the 'constant stream of smaller request demanding timely responses', warning of dire consequences for the academy (p. 1237). They make a plea to slow things down and suggest strategies for Slow scholarship: *count what others don't; organise; take care; write fewer emails; turn off email; make time to think; make time to write differently; say no, say yes; and reach for the minimum.*

We have been working in different ways to create spaces of possibilities: Justine through personal commitment to yoga classes during the workday, and Sandy through the creation of networks to bring groups of people together.

Justine: Reclaiming space in our lives to engage in yoga and the things that help us to re-charge, re-create, re(birth) ourselves feels to me like a liminal space of possibility. I guard an hour on Thursdays to go to lunch-time yoga. I used to feel apologetic about this, not wanting to say that I was refusing meeting invites to go to yoga, but I have become braver and now demonstrate

my willingness to engage in self-care and articulate why I feel it is important. Most people are supportive - "Good on you!" - but this is often followed with "Of course, I could never do that. I just don't have the time". I want to live an authentic, whole-hearted life so this means actively creating spaces (and time) in which I can actively live in accordance with my values. I'm not saying that this is always easy or comfortable but overall it is easier and more gratifying than to constantly hide behind a mask of inauthenticity.

In claiming the small space for lunchtime yoga I have also become (en)couraged to find and create other spaces of possibility in my academic work and its practical application – for example my doctoral research into EC teacher's practice of mindful self-compassion has recently led to the offering of a Mindfulness Meditation and Compassion group for Faculty staff. These are examples of how heterotopic spaces comprise complex fluid transitions, movable borders and thresholds – how one act in space and time can blossom outwards and create others.

Sandy: *Yes, and other ways we have been playing with space is by creating new fluid networks, for example, the Narrative and Metaphor Special Interest Network (NaMSIN) and the Wellbeing Research and Pedagogy Group (WRaP). We [Sandy and colleague: Esther Fitzpatrick] created the NaMSIN to open up a place for research in narrative theory and inquiry about 7-8 years ago. At the time we felt despondent about the lack of narrative research and the heavy emphasis on quantitative research – we didn't know that there was a number of others like us! The Network has been host to all manner of presentations drawing on quite different methodological and disciplinary orientations, including dance, music, poetry and drama and performance work. One of the most exciting outcomes is the range of people that identified with the group and wanted to belong and or engage in particular projects. Some call it their 'academic home' and talk about being isolated in the academy without it. Many collaborations and writings have emerged. It has never been one thing or another – it has morphed over time to reflect various generative effects that ebb and flow. I see similar possibilities for our new group WRaP – for it to evolve in a fluid and organic way as it responds to different waves and streams of interest.*

Both WRaP and NaMSIN are countercultural and transdisciplinary groups—crossing school and faculty boundaries while flowing along institutional veins. These are spaces of interruption which

exist successfully and grow organically, without the need for a lot of infrastructure. They flourish in response to people's energy, connectivity and organisational skills. They are 'grass roots' open groups, thriving organically in their communities of interest. Both groups provide monthly seminars, symposia and spaces to network. WRaP—our latest venture—developed out of our own research interests. In part, we credit the community orientation of our early childhood experience to seeing the potentialities of WRaP. When we started to discuss the idea of WRaP, we found more and more people doing similar things or interested in doing similar things. Some did not know where to start, who to approach and even if they could research in this field. While in its infancy, we envisage WRaP as a metaphorical gathering place that has affect and gives effect to exciting possibilities, inviting new spaces and places of belonging. Care of self and others is a cornerstone of ECEC, and we recognised the growing conversation in our circles of influence. In this way, WRaP grew out of an understanding of the strength of collectivity, committed to principles of inclusion and diversity it provides platforms for developing ideas and research that bring together postgraduate students and professors, faculties, other institutions and the general public. We are committed to a loose organisational structure, one that is responsive and evolving, and hopefully one that empowers places for authentic engagement.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have explored aspects of our journeys as women, mothers and ECEC teachers within academia. We have struggled with revealing our authentic ways of being within the academy, particularly our contemplative practices. Yet, these practices have supported us and others, in interrupting taken-for-granted limitations, allowing for new forms of expression in the university that are vibrant with possibilities. Bringing together our personal contemplative practices with feminine perspectives, we are committed to interrupting the inhuman/non-human nature of the university, to generating new spaces for genuine ways of being. Embracing the positive characteristics of interruption has invigorated our search for new ways of being alongside and in

response to other academics. It is clear that more consciously revealing our contemplative practices and dwelling authentically in the institution are essential to finding any sort of nourishment, or even to surviving, in the university. In exploring this new territory, we are conscious of the reaction of those in authority who pay lip service to upstarts and freethinkers to show how ‘forward thinking’ and ‘tolerant of difference’ the leadership is. We are mindful too of how neoliberal ideology appropriates humanistic language—words like freedom, mindfulness and community—to serve its own ends, for the purpose of increased productivity and cost savings rather than out of concern for human well-being and sustainability (Doran, 2018). The university, in its commitment to economic rationalism as fundamental to its existence, is no safe haven from such instrumental treatment of staff.

The idea of embedding contemplative practices in university life brings to mind the ‘c’ words that reflect the practices and traditions of early childhood: community, collaboration and cooperation. This focus is in stark contrast to the ‘c’ words that characterise the practices of management in its preoccupation with compliance and control. This contrast is ever-present in the university. For the university to nurture the feminine, we need more inclusive models of governance and administration that provide nourishing environments for real human engagement and that actively support diverse academic discourses. The machine and the organic are each able to achieve their purposes, but this needs to be accomplished in ways that support and enable each other in sustainable ways. Of course, the university has to achieve outcomes and produce qualifications consistent with the need for economic productivity in an increasingly technological and competitive society. But in its practices, its curriculum and its treatment of staff, it needs to pursue a wider purpose that attends to sustainable practices and to the diverse social fabric of society and all that entails—the human harmonised with, not harnessed to, the machine.

Our commitment to nurturing the feminine in academia is embodied in growing networks, communication and support groups, and shared approaches to contemplative practice. We argue for more narrative and dialogue in the subversion of traditional research methodology, and for appropriating the language of research to practices of the

feminine. Let us nurture the feminine through fluidity, quiet resistance, peaceful interruption, authentic being and collaborative approaches to academic life.

Notes

1. Pākehā refers to a 'New Zealander of European descent - probably originally applied to English-speaking Europeans living in Aotearoa/New Zealand'. Definition retrieved 18 April 2019 from <https://maori.dictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&keywords=pakeha>.
2. For a definition and discussion of contemplative practice, see *The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society*, <http://www.contemplativemind.org/practices/tree>.

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(Re)Claiming Our Soulful Intuitive Lives: Initiating Wildish Energy into the Academy Through Story, Dreaming and Connecting with Mother Earth

Linda Henderson, Alison L. Black
and Prasanna Srinivasan

I am Linda: Who I am is complicated and often concealed. My life in academia has been one of so many leadership roles, ('career killers' a female professor once opined). A 'mother' to many: M-othering and supporting, always available, always smiling, always willing to go the extra mile. But behind this facade are other stories of who I am. Do I dare reveal the blackness that lingers and threatens this impression? Do I reveal the inner child who has longed to know what it is to be loved by a mother? Or the child who became 'that single mother'

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before she was ready; a single mother needing to prove herself; proving and achieving, completing a Ph.D. faster than so many; her daughter resentfully accusing 'we all did your PhD Mum'. This same daughter, now an adult, has returned after a period of absence full of darkness and illness. The smokescreen continues, and I maintain my mothering-othing in the academy. The blanket of secrecy falls deeper around me pushing me into emotional turmoil. I can feel myself slipping into 'that academic', that role expected by the patriarchy. But somewhere in this slippage I have found an in-between space. A space with other-woman-mothers. A space where the shroud of secrecy flutters to bring in some lightness of soul and of heart, where resistance, and the reclaiming of my inner child, is a possibility. This is a space in which I dare to dream, to connect, to pause, to reclaim what has been stolen. In this space I am daring other ways of being; wild and unruly. I don't need to prove my worth here. Rather, this is a space where I can say: I am Linda and here I am.

I am Ali: I am a white Australian woman in the afternoon of my life. I have been in the academy a quarter-century. My own mothering and daughtering roles have seeped into my work and 'interrupted' my outputs across the decades. Gaps in my CV, but not in my heart, not in my life. My family is getting smaller. My parents now dead, my children grown. I am the matriarch and I am not ready. I miss my mother and my grandmother deeply, yet, I feel they walk beside me. I lean into this hope; this sense of ancestry. My personal experiences of mothering and motherhood have been nurturing, rich and full of love. My experience of academe less kind. It has, until recently, been a lonely and solitary journey, with elders/mentors/motherly/sisterly connections few and far between. Where are our academic elders, mentors, mothers, sisters? Too busy? Exhausted? Is it no surprise I want a different kind of academia, a different kind of world, for myself and for others? I am worried about world affairs, about climate change and what lies ahead, about the patriarchy, about what governments and universities are becoming; have become. It is easy to fall into despair and hopelessness. These feelings lurk behind me, too close for my liking. More and more I recognise I need stillness and silence. I need to breathe, and to sense. To retreat. To connect. Contemplation, noticing, listening,

intuiting are my daily revolutionary acts. With my writing and stories, I dare to dream. I dare to birth something new, something else, something wildish.

I am Prasanna: I am a woman, I am a mother, and the rest of the categories don't matter. My motherhood and mothering began before I had my own children. My mother was my child.

I became a mother to my mother when I was thirteen. Before then, my grandmother mothered me with much love and care, and I learnt from her how to give unconditionally. Hence, I gave and gave to my mother, father, brother, husband, children, and to any being in any form who needed anything at all. When I began my career in academia, it hindered all that giving. I would start my day opening my email, my stomach churning with anticipation. My heart would race with thoughts of 'what do I have to do?', 'what did I forget to do?' and 'what else do I have to do?' There was no time to stop. There was no time to engage with the feelings of the beings around me. I looked around, and there were men, and more men, setting more expectations, and more performance standards for me to meet. Men and women always busy, always aiming high, always keeping up with the standards. Do I want to become a mere standard? I am flesh, blood and bones and I want to remain that. I want to take time, time to ponder, to wander and to meander. Am I selfish? I don't know, you tell me.

N

W E

S

We come to these pages with intention. We have come together to write. *Linda. Ali. Prasanna.* We have come together to (re)claim our soulful intuitive lives. *Linda. Ali. Prasanna.* We have come together to story, dream and connect with Mother Earth. *Linda. Ali. Prasanna.* We have come together to find/initiate/birth our wildish energy into the academy. *Linda. Ali. Prasanna.*

It is said that there is ‘human time’ and ‘wild time’ (Estés, 1992), ‘finite games’ and ‘the infinite game’ (Harre, Grant, Locke, & Sturm, 2017). For much of our work/lives, the academy dictates our attention and is concerned with human time, narrowly focusing us on finite games and the seemingly never-ending pursuits of competing, achieving and proving our worth. In spreading ourselves so thinly, there is great risk we will dissolve into nothing more than obedient soul-less subjects who serve the function of academia’s patriarchal structures and strictures; there is great risk we will dissolve into nothing...

Wild time, captured in rhythms, seasons and smells, in temperatures, in the awareness rain is coming, of parrots and pollen-filled flowers, of sun-burned skin, of cycles of ‘questing and resting’, ‘creating and incubating’. Wild time... let us keep mementos for remembering... The pebble from the stream, the feather on our path, the blossom blown into our doorway, our stories of the spider and the wind... the traces of our girlhoods, our sketches of the moon and our natural soul-full cycles, utterances from our writing together. Here. Now. Let us tune into our home-sickness for our wild and wildish time.

The infinite game offers a way to tune in, a path to reclamation, to promise. It beckons life, insight, imagination, deep listening and care. It calls to us and asks us to engage. To respond in heartfelt ways to one another. Ah, the lightness calls to us. Our chapter an opportunity to lean into wild time, into the infinite game.

And, what do we want of you dear reader?

We want you to come sit with us. Come join our circle of reflection, lamentation, and labouring. As you sit, you might consider who you are, what you bring, what you desire. You might witness, respond, resist. You might notice if home-sickness arises in your belly; and find medicine.

Lamentations

Women in academia have long lamented over their inability to achieve containment of the finite games of academe. Comparison, competition, striving, production is the norm. It is hard to avoid the harsh impact of these on families, bodies, hearts and souls. So, how do we move beyond

the lamenting, and create containment lines to hold the deadening fire of neoliberalism's regulation and quantification before the devastating winds pick up? How do we assert our intuition and attend to our wild, infinite and instinctual natures? Perhaps we cannot move 'beyond' just yet... Perhaps we need to honour and 'be-with' our lived experiences, our anxieties, our fears, our uncertainties, our crying out? Perhaps we need to involve ourselves in 'witness consciousness' (Walsh & Bai, 2015), and acts of 'wit(h)nessing' (Snowber & Bickel, 2015)?

We use our chapter to cultivate that which 'befalls to our sharing', knowing that what matters is not what is out there, 'but in the most secret of our here' (Irigaray, 2017, pp. 89, 90) ...the here and now:

I have just read our abstract and I am contemplating the notion of 'time' and just how stretched I am feeling as I struggle with so many demands. I have been living with a greatly heightened sense of university time and how it just refuses to stop. Maybe if it stopped for just one moment it might be able to hear the beating anxiety that surges through my body as deadlines pile up around me? I am desperately trying to settle the sickness that arises as another email comes through with more expectations to produce more work.

My humble apologies. I had meant to get to our chapter before now. I simply haven't had space in my diary to get to it. I am working ridiculous hours each day and across public holidays and weekends – which I try not to do as a mental health and resistance measure. But I am finding I must at the moment. For whatever reason, my current workload is not doable despite my most valiant efforts.

Please don't apologise.

I haven't made much progress either. My apologies too.

For some reason, I am stalling again.

With teaching and marking there isn't much space for creativity.

So sorry.

Will try and get back to it as soon as I finish marking.

Our colleague, Margaret Somerville (1999), considered and named the tensions that we as female academics experience when we try and build our sense of who we are within patriarchal structures—a feeling of being ‘...reluctant to enter the world of Men and Language’ (p. 85); and, a sense of uneasiness and questioning, ‘...where is it safe to do this writing?’

And how do we even begin? The master’s demands are so demanding! How are your numbers? Your publications and outputs? Your h-indexes? Describe your evidence and impact. Tell me you are busy. Let me examine your productivity, your labouring processes, the outputs you are birthing. Open yourself to my demands.

Seeing and feeling the tension, futility and impact of neoliberalism’s finite values, we create our containment lines. We quiet ourselves and contemplate our secret infinite knowledge of here, our secret knowledge of heart and haal. We tune into moments of soul.

Omid Safi (2014), writes:

I am not asking how many items are on your to-do list, nor asking how many items are in your inbox. I want to know how your heart is doing, at this very moment. Tell me. Tell me your heart is joyous, tell me your heart is aching, tell me your heart is sad, tell me your heart craves a human touch. Examine your own heart, explore your soul, and then tell me something about your heart and your soul.

How is your haal? How is your heart doing at this very moment, at this breath?
(<http://www.onbeing.org/blog/the-disease-of-being-busy/7023>)

Prasanna-heart-soul-moments

M(y)other, I finally found you, but, you left forever.

This is our story

The story of the bereft; bound by our tears, frustration, distances and mournings

Yet, s(tr)ung by our laughter and music; our music, our hummings and singings

Yes, we sang. And when we sang nothing mattered

Who we were became matted

Who was me and who was my mother

*As we hummed and sang together
 We (be)came together
 Yes, we were one and not one and 'other'
 Me and Mother, became m(y)other
 But now, there is just me but no other
 Where are you, mother?*

Ah, yes, you tell me something about your heart and your soul. I want to listen, to stop and really listen, to give you space to share what your heart desires to say, what your soul needs to share. I will sit here with you.

How is your haal? So lovely. I knew you would get it.

Pelias (2004) describes a methodology of the heart, a methodology that is 'located in the researcher's body – a body deployed not as a narcissistic display but on behalf of others, a body that invites identification and empathic connection, a body that takes as its charge to be fully human' (p. 1).

But, the researcher's body...

is...curled up in her office crying, she finds herself unable to leave. She is trapped by fear, by what is unfolding. She is told her heart doesn't belong here in this space – the space of the university. She's an academic – rational, logical, measured, intelligent, resilient...characteristics she should embody. Separate your mind and body. Leave behind the heart. It does not belong here. Pick it back up again when you leave.

But her heart has come to work with her. She cannot leave it behind. She is trapped. Her body is failing, falling apart, breaking open, cracking up, breaking down. Her heart is crying out – "no more, please no more, I cannot go on."

A finite game player in the academy asks: "How are you feeling? Did you manage to keep your research going whilst you were on sick leave?"

But you, you with your wildish energy asks "How is your haal? How is your heart doing at this very moment, at this breath?"

Ah my breath. I notice my breath, in...out...in...out... and slower still..... inhale.....exhale..... inhale..... exhale.....

N

W E

S

Writing from the Womb-Room

How are our motherly-natures supporting our fertility and complicity? How might we more strongly reject the regulating practices imposed on us? Speaking our creative discourse amongst the patriarchal structures is our secret way of questioning/rejecting neoliberalism's values. Yet, our writing and publishing is simultaneously maintaining the structures we are resisting. We do not have easy answers. In fact, we feel weary. Barren. Our wombs do not want to generate any more texts for the institution. We do not want to keep performing procreative acts or playing finite games.

Like Tillie Olsen (cited in Webber & Grumman, p. 60), we are not lacking the capacity or ability to write. We can produce outputs. But we *are* tired of being found lacking. We are tired... of being 'interruptible, responsive, responsible'.

In motherhood, as it is structured, circumstances for sustained creation are almost impossible. Not because the capacities to create no longer exist, or the need... but the need cannot be first... Motherhood means being instantly interruptible, responsive, responsible. (Webber & Grumman, p. 60)

This constant 'labour' costs us...are the shoulders coming now? We cry out in the dark. It feels too hard. Our desire to write is diminished due to our weariness. We need to rest. At least work-to-rule. We need to not-write.

We know we are not-writing for a reason. We are seeking time. Sacred time. Secret time. Stillness. Spaciousness. Safe ways to connect, and safe places too. A 'womb-room' (Somerville, 1999), where our not-writing might birth words about things that matter; might birth writing that strengthens and enables; writing that is joyous.

A womb-room – a sweat lodge – the womb of Mother Earth? A place of spiritual and physical ceremony and dreaming.

Words and desires are incubating.

Our sisterly/motherly relationships hold us in these waiting moments; they support us, sustain us.

We are like poets in labour:

The poet is in labor [Denise Levertov wrote in "The Poet in the World"]. She has been told that it will not hurt but it has hurt so much that pain and struggle seem, just now, the only reality. But at the very moment when she feels she will die, or that she is already in hell, she hears the doctor saying, "Those are the shoulders you are feeling now" – and she knows the head is out then, and the child is pushing and sliding out of her, insistent, a poem. (Webber & Grumman, p. 85)

We are liberating ourselves.

We are reuniting with our wildish energies.

The words of our hearts are making their way towards us.

Yes, we are gathering in the darkness, around the red-hot stones.

A sweat lodge. Away from the master's eyes.

We are creating a sacred intimate space in the dark.

And so how do we write? What is our process? Our labour? Let us begin with this idea of living in our bodies, our bodies below our heads, our bodies below our navels. As we write, let us move into this space of being in our bodies, of growing into our skin and bones, hearts, bellies, souls and wombs. Let us live, grow, cry and write our bodies. Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989, p. 36) says 'Women must write through their bodies'. We must write through our bodies. Let us rethink our bodies as we write. Attend to our bodies as we write and not-write.

And so, we gather, arriving when we are ready. We heat the stones with fire, water, the steam rising, the intensity of the heat like the fires we face in our work, in our lives. Dangerous, scorching. We have come here to heal. We lean towards the fire, inviting the dancing flames to light our inner fires, to burn away the pain and pressures. We allow the steam to overcome, to soak into our skins. Our bodies warming, our senses attuning. Listening to the dark. Inside this heat, this birthing room, we let go of conformity, we speak to our stories however they come, we fall into the walls of the earth, into the body of another... a strange ceremony of song-lines, standstills, heart-lines, stillness, sitting, sitting-with, remembering, shedding our stolen skins, losing time, (re) turning, transforming...

Our writing/not-writing from our womb-room is happening amidst the seasons, amidst our daily activities. Marking, teaching, more marking, preparing conference talks, attending meetings, loving and grieving loved ones across their lives and ours, and all that this entails. These activities do not prevent our listening or our going deeper. We are learning that our writing/not-writing stories come when they are ready. We take solace in Minh-ha's words:

For the heart of the matter is always somewhere else than where it is supposed to be. To allow it to emerge, people approach it indirectly by postponing until it matures, by letting it come when it is ready to come.

There is no catching, no pushing, no directing, no breaking through, no need for a linear progression which gives the comforting illusion that one knows where one goes. (1989, p. 1)

The story never stops beginning or ending. It appears headless and bottomless for it is built on differences... differences... in the play of structures and of surfaces, but also in timbre and in silence. We-you and me, we and they-we differ in the content of the words, in the construction and weaving of sentences but most of all, I feel, in the choice and mixing of utterances, the ethos, the tones, the paces, the cuts, the pauses. The story circulates like a gift; an empty gift which anybody can lay claim to by filling it to taste, yet can never truly possess. A gift built on multiplicity. One that stays inexhaustible within its own limits. Its departures and arrivals. Its quietness. Its quietness. (1989, p. 2)

We are allowing the process to emerge. To never stop beginning or ending. We enter the writing while simultaneously letting it go. We are quietly writing ourselves into existence—differently, aesthetically, vulnerably—not as the master demands, nor using those forms and formats he prefers or counts. We are writing/not-writing because we are listening—to each other and to ourselves.

...weaving words...circulating utterances...voicing longings and calling...listening to the sounds and silences that emerge.....

.....like rituals of cleansing.... gifting cool cloths and warm hearts....
extending kindness and care.... words of healing.... sharing tears...
 smiles... hope...breaking through.....emptying ourselves out.....

To everything there is a season and a time. A time to turn, turn, turn, and (re)turn.

A sweat lodge, a womb-room.

A space for connecting, responding, to each other, to our past, to our pain, to the Earth, to our power. The cycles of seasons, of birthing and living and

dying and healing. From where will we enter? From the South? The West? The North? The East? Where next will we turn?

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We are turning, tuning into ‘wild time’. ...allowing ourselves to drift. we do not yet have definite beginnings or endings... ...we may not ever... ...this is ‘organic’ writing/not-writing, ‘nurturing’ writing/not-writing’, it is writing/not-writing that ‘resists separation’ (Minh-ha, 1989, p. 38). We know our chapter is a motherly/sisterly undertaking, something inter-related, that engages us in freeing and collective rhythmic and arrhythmic acts of resetting, resting, writing/not-writing, healing and caring.

Two days in a row, time in my swinging chair, closing of eyes, opening of ears, to the sounds around me, outside of me, then turning in, my breath. Slowing down, giving myself permission, an hour, just an hour. An hour to listen. To stop the go go go.

My cycles are ending, the moon is now my compass. Today the new moon, a day of intentions. Of asking. What do I want? What do I desire? To be in my body. Listen.

I trust my choice in this moment, yes, it is the right one. Time slows, expectations dissipate, and I feel the water moving languidly under my skin.

Ali-not-writing

Today, I had committed to write. I have been meaning to write for many days. But my workload is big, and it asks so much of me. When I have come to the place and time of writing, I have found myself spent. For the last three days I have listened to my body. My body has asked me to reset, to rest. And

so, I have sat in my swinging chair, sat weightlessly, closing my eyes. I have allowed my body to slow, my breathing to slow. An hour of stillness. This chair my cocoon, my 'womb-room', my place to settle and soften. My space to be. To not-write.

We have over time been thinking about listening with ears of the heart, of the breath, the soul and the haal. We have been discovering our writing/not-writing together, discovering each other. Sitting with, being with, holding, being heard. We have made visible to each other our lamenting, our loss and our grief. We have split the world open (Henderson & Black, 2018). We (re)turn and make it visible here. An act of humanising higher education. We will not cover it up with fairy floss. We will feel ourselves in our own skins and bones.

Yes, a deliberate standstill. Our place of pausing. Our acts of observation. Creating spaces to cry. Spaces to breathe. Medicine.

We will not live only in our heads. Together, we will seek refuge. We will live in our bodies, our stolen skins and our broken hearts.

your email from late last night has, like you so aptly described, sat like a weight in my belly, and a pressure on my heart. Something intense, enduring, there. The word embodied isn't enough, it is like embodied magnified by 100.

I find life and death so confusing. I get so caught up in things that ultimately matter little/not at all and forget the people and things that matter so very much. I wish I could be more mindful and present. Sometimes after a few hours of sleeping I wake afraid and thinking of my death. The fear and imagining overwhelms me and traps me in the dark. I am not brave.

I do not know how to respond to your story with words, but I am responding in heart-felt ways.

*I stepped into your writing of your **Beautiful Lovely Grandma** and I reached out wanting to offer you comfort as you spoke of leaning over, crying, whispering to her. I felt her words*

that live with you today and closed my eyes with pain as you wrote of that look of shock on her face as she opened her eyes in her last ever moments, and the tsunami-like wave that engulfed you as she drew her final breath. I sat, eyes closed tightly, holding my breath, afraid of what was to follow. I too have seen those eyes – the eyes of my brother departing this world.

Your simple description of you walking back to your car from the hospital room is a journey I know well. I wonder how many story fragments like these we share and know in our cells and bones. A shared knowing. And it is somehow very comforting, after all these years of loss and walking back from hospital wards alone, to know you know what it was like. That we have walked this pain together.

Thank you. This is truly a sacred space. I feel the scars I had forgotten I had. But, I can touch and trace them lightly and know that someone else offers lavender oil and a cool cloth, knows the pain once endured. And strangely that helps, a lot.

Our author collective is writing for freedom, seeking ‘freedom in writing’ (Minh-ha, 1989, p. 12); we are writing to be ourselves, to heal ourselves, to free ourselves from patriarchal agendas. We are also allowing our ‘not-writing’ in order to be ourselves, to heal ourselves, to free ourselves from patriarchal agendas.

And, rather than write, we might just sit. Sit in a swinging chair, or a chair in the bedroom.

I am just sitting here on a Saturday morning in my chair in my bedroom, looking out over my garden. Birds are busy collecting their morning rations of nectar, and by my feet I have one dog resting peacefully after having eaten her breakfast that she so looks forward to. I am sitting here listening to music that soothes my soul. I am going to hold onto your beautiful words today and allow them to touch me and enter my body in ways that will allow me to know that maybe, just maybe, I am doing something of value in my professional/personal life. This means so much to me at this particular time.

Our writing/not-writing is a space of healing and sitting with. And being with. And holding and being heard. So precious. So rare.

'Your body must be heard', Helene Cixous insists (1976, p. 880). She calls us to write from 'deep inside' our bodies, from 'somewhere in the depths of [our] heart[s]... somewhere in [our] stomach[s], [our] womb[s]' (2004, p. 172).

We are becoming more aware. We are our bodies, our cycles, our wombs, our stomachs, our hearts. Our bodies are asking to be heard and nurtured. In order to write, we are attending to our 'linguistic flesh' (Minh-ha, 1989, p. 38). In order to write, we are not-writing, we are thinking, feeling, listening with our entire bodies. We are listening, writing/not-writing, from somewhere in the depths, from somewhere deeper...

Ali-what is my body saying to me-writing

My womb, I feel her pulling down. Months have passed now without blood. My belly/womb is swollen today, I feel her dull ache, the tiredness, the new moon my compass now. How strange this is, this 'men' – o – pause. Winter, North, Crone, Earth. Yes. Today. A time to nourish, slow, and rest. Intuition. A time where words might emerge. Might slide out. I feel my body calling me for nourishment. I awoke this morning in a dreaming of brothers, mothers, cycles, a prayer of four directions, sensing Mother Earth through the pre-dawn noises and the purring of my cat. The ache in my shoulders connects, spreading down into my spine, pooling in my lower back. If I listen too long, I might not get up, might not get what I need to get done. Too many hours/months/years at the computer. Too many more ahead. I have to go, go, go. As I walk down the stairs, the dawn yet to break, my cat coming with me, in the way of my next step, the arch in my foot throbs. I have twisted or strained something. I walked the beach when the tide was high. Spongy soft sand challenged my arch-y foot, my aging knees. Ah, but I am alive. My breath, I notice between these words I am typing, is not even. It is shorter. Sharper. Than. I would. Like. But it is breath, and I am noticing. I breathe in peace. I swallow water to seal it in my cells. My new ritual. Peace, water, in, down, expanding. Peace for this day. Peace no longer out of my own blood, my own cycles. Only images now, images of water, water from the source, that trickles down my throat, down into my cells, down into my womb, a meandering stream, a flow of life, of strange words running down this page, for my sisters to read.

Linda-belly-seeking-writing

I need to listen to a story that resides in my belly, to the knowledge that arises from my belly. The belly that is whole – that needs no other – to be whole – yet also is part of another whole – the body it inhabits. It’s a belly that feels, senses, reacts and retracts. It knows without a need to see – to think – it has no need to wait for orders from any other whole but rather prods and provokes the whole it inhabits. It has a life – it is life. It sustains yet also can constrain the life it inhabits. There is a story it seeks to tell. It is a story that cannot be told in words/language of man – only that of the body/body language. Body language that I learnt to push down as the language of man demanded this belly adopt his/story of language and codes producing me as wo/man, m(other). Can I listen...can I stop the ‘go, go, go’ to listen...listen deeply to that which reside in the depths of my belly seeking to spew forth and tell its story...” to be lost, to encounter impasses, to fall, and to desire...to bring about new awareness of life into previously forgotten, silenced, or deadened areas of [my] body”. (Minh-ha, 1989, pp. 40 & 42)

Prasanna-heart-tearing-writing

I feel this tightness. Someone is squeezing my heart so tight that I feel I can’t breathe.

Deep within, I listen to the tears shed. Tears that never roll down. They remain trapped within the chest.

Those tears still locked with-in-heart. Can I let them roll down? Can I cry and just lie down and crumble into a heap for as long as I want? Can I tear my heart and let my tears flow?

Yes, we listen with our whole bodies, our bodies that must be heard. We write from the depths, from somewhere deeper. And as we do, we are re-appropriating the ways the academy calls us to produce and reproduce. We are reclaiming our bodies. We are resting and listening. We are engaging processes that match our bodies. That match our need for space, silence, stillness, Spirit.

Linda – Spirit Child

*The spirit child
 Holding space to hear
 The call
 Of Longing*

*Deep within the womb
 Depth
 Darkness surrounds
 Envelops
 Silences
 Nuances
 Who dares to listen
 To hear the call
 The cry of the Spirit Child*

*She calls you home
 The Spirit Child
 Guiding you gently
 Holding you close
 To safety and stillness
 Wayfaring lines to home*

The spirit child enables me to return home. Spirit child is a power from deep within – imploring me, calling me home. Holding space for me to enter. Engaging me in important work. The work of (re)turning home to my seal skin. The skin that was so violently taken. Thieves in the night stole it from me, sought to plunder my soul, stole all I was meant to be, stole what was rightfully mine. A shell was all that was left. Left me vulnerable and raw.

Dried and skinless I humbly reach out to my sisters in whom I have come to find a place where the “go, go, go” in me can momentarily pause...to breathe as I try to (re)member who I was. Can I even (re)member who I was? I seem to have lost any knowledge of who I was in the “go, go, go”. I fear the (re)turning to my place of being (re)united with my soulskin might cause such

an eruption that I know there is a resistance. My sisters call out to me. They remind me to just breathe...like midwives attending with such gentle care to this act of (re)birthing and (re)turning home to my Spirit Child...in time/no time you will (re)climb to the tips of the trees and join in chorus with the songs of the forest you know so well...in time/no time Mother Earth will meet you in the tips of those trees as you join in the laughter of the kookaburras that your Spirit Child once knew so well. Wild and wildish laughter singing the songs that once arose deep from my belly calling forth to the wisdom of Mother Earth.

Dream Writing from Our Wild Selves

We must not let ourselves be driven away from our bodies. We must remember. We must (re)turn. We must find our way back. We must find ways to experience this world differently. To do academia differently. To write differently. To give ourselves permission to dream and not-write.

When armors and defense mechanisms are removed, when new awareness of life is brought into previously deadened areas of the body, women begin to experience writing/the world differently. This is exciting and also very scary. For it takes time to be able to tolerate greater aliveness. Hence the recurrence of musts and must-nots. As soon as a barrier is destroyed, another is immediately erected. Call it reform or expansion. Or else, well-defined liberation revolution. Closure and openness, again, are one ongoing process: we do not have bodies, we are our bodies, and we are ourselves while being the world. Who can endure constant open-endedness? Who can keep on living completely exposed? We write-think and feel-(with) our entire bodies rather than only (with) our minds or hearts. (Minh-ha, 1989, p. 36)

Estés (1992) reminds us that we all have a ‘homing device’ that can help us ‘find our way back’ even if we have become lost (p. 291). She tells us that women have become captive to a world that tells them they must

‘go, go, go’ and in this act of being held captive there is a ‘stealing of [our] soulskins’ (p. 290). Theft and plundering upon the woman’s body as she learns to dance the frenzied moves that have her ‘going, going, going’ but never stopping, never slowing, never pausing just to breathe to connect to that which is vital to her being. Left to ‘wander through life skinless’.

The sweat lodge, a womb-room.

A place to ‘find our soulskins, find our way home’.

A place to (re)turn.

Can you hear the owl? Owl is the master of the night. She is not afraid of the dark. She will help you find your lifelight/lightness in the dark moments of your life. Do not be afraid of the dark and its darkness. Open your ears to owl. Open your ears, hear the voices of your ancestors, the wisdom of your ancestors. Notice the details, notice the dark, the truth of the dark, it will be your compass...

Now, in our writing/not-writing we are listening for owl. We are nurturing the wild, receptive aspects of our intuition and sensing. We are ‘wild time’ focused and slowing into this ‘womb-room-like’ sweat lodge space where we are not-writing, not-producing. A womb-like space where we are listening. Bundling together our stories and beginning to dream. Connecting our bare feet with Mother Earth—baring lives, bearing witness. Wit(h)nessing the truth of the dark.

N’arweet Carolyn Briggs, a respected Boon Wurrung Elder of Victoria, Australia, says: ‘To understand the soul of this country—you must first understand the power of its women’ (2018). We seek to traverse the terrain of our soul country. What is our power? Where does our power reside?

In this darkness? In this vulnerability? Perhaps in what we bundle together. In our M-othering stories. In our pausing to breathe. In our opening to a dreaming with Mother Earth. With Ancestors (Fig. 1).

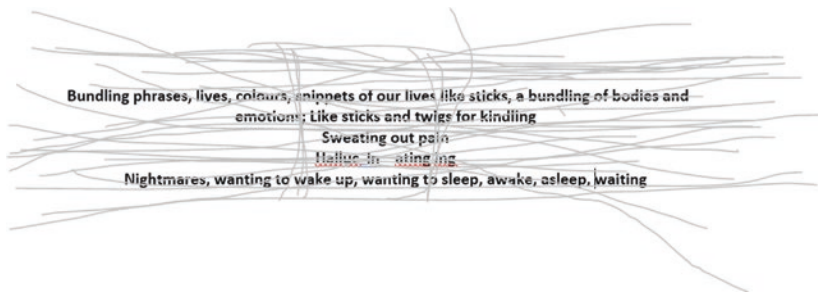


Fig. 1 Does our power reside in what we bundle together?

A sweat lodge, a womb-room.

A space for connecting, responding, to each other, to our past, to our pain, to the Earth, to our power. The cycles of seasons, of birthing and living and dying and healing. From where will we enter? From the South? The West? The North? The East? Where next will we turn?

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Linda-nature-dreaming with Mother Earth, with ancestors

Silence and peace are plentiful as we sit side-by-side. A long yet gentle walk bringing us to this place we rest upon. Land infused with the Song-lines of our ancestors. We sit and listen – deep listening. We have always had this connection to listen deeply to the land. Did I pass it onto her? Did she discover it in her own way? Was it our unique and uniquely co-created stories and journeys that brought us to this place of deep listening? Reaching out I gently take her hand. Whispering quietly, I tell her: “You are loved – your beauty, your courage, your gentleness, your vulnerability. All of you loved.”

How have we both got here? This place of deep connections when the journey has been infused with so many lines of trauma? Broken song-lines, maternity lines, family lines. Quietly I reflect aloud; "We are both courageous. We are! We have learnt to reach out – to lean into pain and allow its beauty to shine through. We are bearers of this, we are witnesses of this. We bear witness to our co-created stories."

Through pain can come transformation. Pain has been our gateway to where we now reside. It has been the gateway to love that moved us beyond shame and guilt to acceptance and guidance. Gently and lovingly leading us to this place, making possible this deep connection we now rest in. Song-lines of love and loss, healing and renewal – listen closely to its beat, its rhythm:

Stand tall and proud	Heart, speak its wisdom
You are strong	Sing, your poetic wisdom
Brave	Of ancient knowledges
Warrior	Of ancient knowings
Woman	Ancient longings
Claim your space	Bring forth that which can only be touched
Refuse to be small	In silence and stillness
Invisible	Breathing in,
You are worthy	Breathing out
Worthier than you know	Beating
Bring forth your light	Healing wisdom
Your healing rays	

Turn, turn, turn, turn...

Ali-nature-dreaming with Mother Earth, with ancestors

It has been all consuming. This despair. Is it too late? The future of the earth, my children's futures. Do they have a future? Making placards with my daughter, "There is no Planet B". My feet in the sand, the warmth on my skin, I feel the flames of fear. I lean in.

In the sweat lodge. I breathe in the smoke, the dark. I receive. I feel history and hope. I hear my grandmother's voice

"I'll walk beside you through the world today, through the passing years".

Memories of our close connection, of our tender and deep relationship flood my body. "Forward one". She invites me to turn,

towards Love. I sense my heart softening and I dare to believe that I am not alone, I never have been alone, I will never be alone. Whatever the season, the dawn or the eventide, "I'll walk beside you" she replies.

*I have birthed this truth. I nurse it.
It fills me with strength. Fills my heart. I will not run away. She walks beside me.
She walks beside my children. She meets me in the land of dreams.*

Turn, turn, turn, turn...

Prasanna-nature-dreaming with Mother Earth, with ancestors

It is a year, since that day you stopped singing and humming with me. I was mourning all these months and days. One whole year, just dwelling in the silence. I stopped singing too. I swore to never listen to the song I sang as you slipped into eternal sleep. Never to wake up again. I mourn, and I sleep. Us, the living sleep and wake up, night after night, day after day. But, you sleep an eternal sleep, never to wake up again. But, us, the living dream, and I dream.

They, the priests say you are now one with the universe, conjoined with universal consciousness. They chanted special mantras to awaken the universal consciousness to embrace you. They said that our ancestors will lead you to become one with many. So Amma, are you not gone anywhere? Because, you are everywhere and somewhere, yet nowhere. One with the universe, but many.

And, I dream. Chandra, moon, your name. I see you day after day, and night after night. I hear you when the currawong sings. Every morning, every evening. I feel you ever so slightly in the wafting breeze. You hum gently as the drizzle patters steadily. You gleam as the dew drop catching a ray of sunshine. You laugh and sway as a silken web in the wind. And you gently soothe and kiss me as the waves lap my feet.

*You are there, in different forms, different livings,
Everywhere, anywhere and somewhere, yet, nowhere,
Always there. And I dream, of the many you are,
You are with your all others, fathers and mothers,
Singing, humming and laughing with m(your)others.
I sing, hum and laugh,
I dream.....*

Turn, turn, turn, turn...

Turning and (Re)Turning, Emerging Again into Human Time

Our organic nurturing of writing/not-writing, of sitting together in the dark, is a soulful reclamation. We are initiating our wildish energy into the academy, into our own bodies. It is filling us up, freeing us to dream and connect with ourselves, each other, with Mother Earth, with ancestors. Our writing/not-writing is replenishing us. It is happening slowly, but it is happening. This process of writing/not-writing from our womb-room is a resource and a process that is 'clarify[ing], over time, what it is that is most important to us' (Estés, 1992, p. 263). The treasure of our souls. Our hearts. Our wholeness. The infinite game. This writing/not-writing together around the red-hot stones, the womb of the mother helps us feel 'entirely in and of ourselves' (Estés, 1992). It gives us back our skins, even for a moment, reviving us as we engage in this cycle of 'going and returning, going and returning'.

We are turning, turning directions, moving, turning, lamenting, turning, standing, turning, sitting, turning, dreaming, turning. We are not with our turning and (re)turning running out of directions, rather we are turning toward our 'wildish' souls, initiating our 'wildish' energy, trusting our organic feminine rhythms, untangling, resetting, and engaging in a 'cyclical return to home'. We cannot 'toil too long without respite'. But we know our souls' value now.

Through holding our lived and intuitive aspects close together in consciousness and conversation we are being strengthened and connected to what is infinite, to what 'is soul' and to that which 'feeds soul' (Estés, 1992). For us, this 'writing as soul-work' is 'soften[ing] old scar tissue, balm[ing] old wounds, and [helping us] envision anew' (p. 13). It is care, it is cure, and it is medicine for our souls, our 'little seals', our 'instinct-injured' academic lives and work.

A sweat lodge, a womb-room.

A space for connecting, responding, to each other, to our past, to our pain, to the Earth, to our power. The cycles of seasons, of birthing and living and dying and healing. From where will we enter? From the South? The West? The North? The East? Where next will we turn?

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Response. Mothering Bodies and Sensations: The Sound of Lamentation—Hearing Maternal Academic Subjects

Alison Bartlett

This section on Mothering Bodies and Sensations presents an abundance of personal narratives trying to make sense of multiple maternal academic subjectivities and also trying to live those lives as ethical subjects. As I read them, I feel drawn down to a miasmic past, to the days when I was continually moving between work and home never fast enough, like Helen Johnson's idea of stolen time. These narratives echo through me like a howl. I can only read one chapter at a time. I feel it resonate in me for days. The chapters build an affective economy that can be felt in the body, and in this body that recalls similar sensations, rages, longings and languages that go unheeded in the metres and metrics of institutions. The rhythms of these lives are incessant, tormented and dedicated, and yet this suite of chapters offers some common tactics for articulating the complexities of maternity in academic lives. Creativity, experimentation, intellectual contemplation, play, companionship and a scrupulously effective use of time are evident

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in manifesting new languages through which to name and disrupt contemporary industrial relations of the academy.

The overwhelming feature of these chapters is the deeply felt personal affect of working in, out, around and through universities. The affects are felt bodily—whether through the ability to breathe, to love, to resist or to conform—and to read about these conditions also activates deeply personal feelings. I understand these narratives as a kind of lament. The *Oxford English Dictionary* online determines that lament originated in Late Middle English, from the French *lamentier* or Latin *lamentari*, but laments are a much more ancient form of mourning; they are found in ancient Greek epics, in Sumerian tablets, in Sanskrit Vedas and in Hebrew scriptures. While definitions are often limiting and always ideologically framed, they nevertheless present a linguistic legacy of meanings and usage. In the case of lament, the *OED* gives us this:

lament

/lə'ment/

noun

1. a passionate expression of grief or sorrow.
'his mother's night-long laments for his father'
synonyms: wail, wailing, lamentation, moan, moaning, groan, weeping, crying, sob, sobbing, keening, howl, complaint
 - 1.1 A song, piece of music, or poem expressing grief or sorrow.
'the piper played a lament'
2. a complaint.
'there were constant laments about the conditions of employment'

verb

1. express passionate grief about.
'he was lamenting the death of his infant daughter'
synonyms: mourn, grieve (for/over), weep for, shed tears for

2. express regret or disappointment about something.

This range of sensations seems a likely collection to apply to the chapters as I read them. A lament feels primal, like keening; a vocal outburst of protest that has been channelled in this volume into an intellectual playground, sourced in life experience and complex thinking. My response is going to follow their lead.

Lamenting Form

The first thing I notice is a generous source of methodologies for writing. The standard academic essay form is declared inadequate for these subjects. The chapters characterise themselves as autoethnography, as narrative inquiry, as contemplative, as epiphany, as interruption, as gifting, as dream and knowledge-making through methodologies that might be established or emergent as they write. These are the politics of writing. They are not afraid to break out of Cambria 12 point standard font aligned text left to be bold and italicised, to be poetic, to script dialogue, call and response, and chorus, to write freehand text in the shape of a heart and hands or to graphically roll up words in a bundle of sticks. These chapters ask sticky questions, divide into columns and mess around with the page in seeking alternate ways to express their thinking on maternal academic subjects and subjectivities. They are alert to the materiality of the page, of pixels and dots that make up letters that can be hyphenated indented repositioned as tools rather than as rules. They also dwell on the process of writing: they apologise for lateness and for slow production, and they ponder the act of not-writing and the inscrutable search for creative energy, turning to metaphor, simile, manifesto and material objects to shape shift in form.

The contributors draw on a fabulous range of theorists: Karen Barad, Luce Irigaray, Helene Cixous, Gaston Bachelard, Trinh T. Minh-ha, Elizabeth Grosz, Sara Ahmed, Brian Massumi, Margaret Somerville and also themselves. They seek out authorities and references from the margins to include elders and innovators who may not be regularly cited or even published but whose knowledge is important and feeds the

hunger to find new ways of being academic. There are words fraught with an ethical politics—sustainability, kindness, authenticity, even love—in response to an institution characterised in terms of mechanics, metrics and industrialisation replete with the politics of patriarchy and the anthropocene. The writing speeds up with rage and anger and icily slows with a searing analytical critique of injustice; it carries us along with stories that are almost homilies and shifts our breath as it moves into stillness, silence and calm. This is powerful writing. In their strenuous expansion of the possibilities of writing, the chapters remind me of Audre Lorde's dictum that 'the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house'. Delivered to a conference on *The Personal is Political* in 1979, Lorde's iconic paper of the same name demands recognition of difference—of black and third world women and lesbians—as a strength of social change, and repositions interdependence and nurture between women as redemptive.

One of the strengths of this collection is the collective writing of each chapter, which not only expands the possible diversity of thinking and experiences but also brings together collaborators in life. From tenured professors to early career to casual to not employed and don't forget middle career academics, all of these contributors demonstrate the benefits of working cross-generationally, cross-culturally, across continents and seniority and time-zones. A few years ago, I started reading all the texts I could on the resistant university worker, the activist neoliberal subject and the slow academic, and the resonant conclusion always was that connection with others was what would keep the world bearable and work sustainable. Volumes like this are testimony to the impact of working together, of becoming unionised. As the union makes us strong, so too does the union of like-minded thinkers who collaborate and create together.

The Good Enough Academic

I remember sitting at the computer with a three month old baby asleep on my lap editing my dissertation into a monograph to meet the publisher's time-frame. This is where I learnt to edit with equanimity: to delete whole sections

without remorse; to accept most changes and only reject some if they exceeded the importance of getting off the computer to sleep. It's a skill that has stayed with me, and also developed into judicious decisions about when to fight broader institutional decisions and when to let them slide.

In many of the stories, I recognise what the psychoanalyst and paediatrician Donald Winnicott termed the 'good enough mother'. This liberating concept from post-war Britain admitted into maternity feelings of ambivalence, frustration and even rage, and also proposed that this was normal and was even a valuable part of infant development. Amidst the increasing scientification of motherhood and insistence on maternal bonding, Winnicott refreshingly acknowledged mothers as experts on their own children. Curiously, the contributors to this volume articulate very little ambivalence about maternity but much towards the academy. Perhaps we can adopt a position of the 'good enough academic', where we can rage against the machine in volumes like this while maintaining our position within its structure. More importantly perhaps the notion of being 'good enough' removes the onus to be the perfect, brilliant, celebrity academic that looms large in our imagination.

At a conference last year, I was listening to papers critiquing and offering resistance strategies to working in the corporatised neoliberal university when one of the speakers, Maud Perrier, suggested that we refuse to love our job. She proposed that this is a coercive device that positions academics in general and women in particular as bonded to academy in ways that go beyond work culture into something more vocational, even devotional. Such life-long dedication exceeds the requirements of the workplace but also becomes normalised within academic culture. As I read the chapters in this section, I am again struck by the strain of resistance, by the sheer exhaustion, tiredness, grief and effort to be excellent workers and yet to find a position and a language to resist that. And there is barely any time to think about such things.

As I write this response my daughter is a thousand kilometres away being creative and clever. She will return for 2 days to graduate from university, and then fly three thousand kilometres away to the other side of the country.

She's leaving home. It feels expansive to be in a house without her, but I have to be careful not to let work slide into nights and weekends. There's no check now, and no need to stop for dinner. I notice the way time and space change. But then I get 20 texts one afternoon (forgotten her meds, sore belly, nearest chemist is 400km away) and all work is suspended again.

The Language of Longing

The strain of the maternal academic subject is felt in the body, and the longing for a kinder relation to the workplace is articulated in the contortions of language. Sarah Crinnall and Anna Vladimirova wring language out to find new positions and alliances. They think about *mother-researcher-hood* using *mother-to-mother-and-more* relations to write on *human-nonhuman-material-discursive* (im)matters. They hyphenate terms to collapse their separation and reinstate an intimacy of ideas, cleaving language and reclaiming it for post-representational purposes. Their dream-like writing on feathers, shearwater, moths and swan mothering, drags up imagery and allusions from a watery subconscious depth into the unstable realm of language. Language is acquired, and English is sometimes the second or third-or-more language adopted by the writers here. The loss that is language is something all the chapters wrestle with and also play with. Phillips, Johnson, Misra and Zavros-Orr reinvent their collegial writing relations through a creative practice of gifting—poems, artworks, photographs, creative text—in a way that responds to and touches the receiver. Their careful crafting of reciprocity is materialised as creative and nurturing as well as analytical; but all feel like they are trying to communicate around/outside of/in excess of language.

I recognised these modes of writing as structured by desire: to change the grammar of academic life, to shift the focus of work from the infinite game to meaningful moments, and yet wrestling with the means to do so. Henderson, Black and Srinivasan write about not-writing, about the need to rest their bodies and the grave difficulties of trying to be creative when there's no time and space for it. They

sit on their chairs and swing. They sit and rest. They use new forms, languages and grammars to lament their desire to write creatively amidst an uncreative workplace culture. I find some of the languages are not to my liking, embarrassing even. Mother earth, spirit children, wild sides and inner children: these are part of a discourse I've thrown away but here they disrupt the smart academic writing style to remind me of a past, to think again through what matters to the heart. It is gutsy, and it pays attention to feelings of the gut, playing on the belly as source of swelling feeling and maternity. The belly belies a fundamental tension between writing smart academic writing and attending to the uncompromising conditions of producing scholarship. The perverse pleasures of writing about not-writing encapsulate the tensions of the contemporary academic research, especially for feminist researchers who are committed to making a difference.

Languages of the body also feature in *Breathing Room*, bringing together a life force that is embodied and involuntary, that takes and makes space. Working around metaphors of making room, I loved the way these large collectives—Bosanquet, Cahir, Crimmins, Free, Luzia, Mantai and Werner—share their writing space to talk about being not a parent nor able to be employed in the academy, about parenting difficulties and illness, about the sheer amount of research that accompanies motherhood and the unpredictability of bodies. While breath, sleep and voice come and go, are strained and released in this chapter amidst the social performance of life, there is something raw/roar about the audacity of this chapter disclosing such vulnerabilities. Again, Farquhar and O'Hara-Gregan's chapter makes a point of their creative self-care practices of meditation, mindfulness, yoga, dance, walking and journaling, which are normally hidden from academic view but are here writ large. Their 'feminised' position as early childhood educators and mothers is used as leverage to both account for their attention to love, kindness, and nurturing and to argue that these values can interrupt the mechanised university to become a place of authentic dwelling and sustainable work practices. This longing to change the workplace into a more humane community of practice is urgent felt in all the chapters.

Playing a Lament

Early in my maternity, I decided that parenting was going to be a way to stop working (late, nights, weekends, holidays) and that I would use those interruptions of a child seeking attention to stop work gratefully. If I hadn't had a child, I think I would have forgotten to stop working (late, nights, weekends, holidays). Now my daughter is grown and left home, work-time risks being less bounded, more fluid and unmanageable. So, I have taken up playing the violin. I don't think I consciously took it up as a foil for working (late, nights, weekends, holidays) but it has quickly become a substitute interruption for the boundlessness of academic work. I play my laments on those strings, find strange new sounds and try new instruments, research the intersections of baroque and folk music traditions, and collaborate with other players several times a week for the pure pleasure of it. For those hours we spend playing, I focus totally on black dots on lines and transform them into sound, forgetting everything else. It's a way of being totally present, the way you can be playing with a child. I play folk tunes by ear, learning them aurally and clumsily dragging them back from memory with groups of friends or strangers. I discover music camps for adults that generate so much pleasure I feel dizzy like an addict. When I travel overseas for work, I look up the community orchestras in the area and brazenly join them for a few weeks or months. I start planning my work commitments overseas to coincide with fiddle hotspots. I pause sometimes and wonder if this is a substitute research project, but decide it doesn't matter because of the sociability and expansive pleasure it brings, without performance reviews or metrics or obligations. It's gradually leaking into the workplace though, as I begin writing on music in literature, in the same way as I started writing on maternal culture all those years ago. It's a way to make sense of my world, to find a language for it.

While I am reading the chapters of this book over several weeks, I think about what kind of music could express such loss and longing. I remember the Scottish laments, a tradition from hundreds of years ago to grieve individuals—like Neil Gow's Lament for his Death of his

Second Wife—or entire cultures, like James Oswald’s Scots Lament, and Highland Lament, composed following the Battle of Culloden in 1746. One night I download the composing software MuseScore and start fiddling about. What would a lament for maternal academics sound like? How can the grief and tiredness and longing become sound? Is it an elegy or a ballad or a lullaby? I start riffing on the traditional lullaby Hush Little Baby, change it to my favourite minor key and add a howl. Here is how the first 16 bars look: a lament for the drowning tired torn and howling academic mothers in G minor. May you keep asking sticky questions, testing the limits of language and institutions, making your own creative forms in which to work (Response Fig. 1).

Lament Trad/Alison Bartlett

The musical score is written in G minor (one flat) and 4/4 time. The first staff (melody) begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. It contains 16 measures: measures 1-2 are eighth notes (G4, A4, B4, C5); measures 3-4 are eighth notes (D5, E5, F5, G5); measure 5 is a quarter note (G5); measure 6 is a quarter note (F5); measure 7 has a fermata over a quarter note (E5); measure 8 has a trill-like flourish (D5, E5, D5); measure 9 is a quarter note (C5); measure 10 is a quarter note (B4); measure 11 is a quarter note (A4); measure 12 is a quarter note (G4); measure 13 is a quarter note (F4); measure 14 is a quarter note (E4); measure 15 is a quarter note (D4); measure 16 is a quarter note (C4). The second staff (accompaniment) begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic. It contains 16 measures: measures 1-2 are block chords (G4-B4, G4-B4); measure 3 is a quarter note (G4); measure 4 is a quarter note (A4); measure 5 is a quarter note (B4); measure 6 is a quarter note (C5); measure 7 has a fermata over a quarter note (D5); measure 8 has a piano (*p*) dynamic marking; measure 9 is a quarter note (E5); measure 10 is a quarter note (F5); measure 11 is a quarter note (G5); measure 12 is a quarter note (A5); measure 13 is a quarter note (B5); measure 14 is a quarter note (C6); measure 15 is a quarter note (B5); measure 16 is a quarter note (A5). The piece ends with a double bar line.

Response Fig. 1 Lament in G minor

Mothering Relations and Vulnerabilities



The Imperceptible Beingness of M/Otherhood in Academia

Anne B. Reinertsen, Bojana Gajic and Louise M. Thomas

We come together and yet are apart. We experience motherhood and mothering in different ways. We are other and are constantly becoming m/other as we write with each other. We are biological mother, we are donor mother and we are other mother. We write as, for and from our academic selves; we write as, for and from our m/other selves. We work with thinkable categories as they disappear, collaboratively linked to a natural web of human, and more than, human agents.

It is a sort of mannerist approach to motherhood in academia or *Thousand Plateaus of Becoming*. Mannerism and mannerist style,

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also known as Late Renaissance (1520–1590), featured the distortion of the human figure, the distortion of perspectives, and utilised flat black backgrounds to give a full contrast of contours. Mannerism was influenced by sculpture, and sculptural forms, experimenting with dimensions. Further, mannerism put emphasis on atmospheric effects and the use of space and atmospheric effects. Last but not least: Mannerists utilised painted frames to blend in with the background.¹ We draw on our multiple dimensions of motherhood, of m/otherhood, to provide ‘painted frames’ for our entanglements with/in academia ... not so much to ‘blend in’, but to open up to multiplicities and possibilities of being/becoming other.

Inspired by Mannerist concepts, and thinking with Deleuze and Guattari, we paint ourselves *grey on grey*, as a (non)symbol of reflexivity: Deleuze and Guattari (2004) write:

To become imperceptible oneself, to have dismantled love in order to become capable of loving. To have dismantled one’s self in order finally to be alone and meet the true double at the other end of the line. A clandestine passenger on a motionless voyage. To become like everybody else; but this, precisely, is a becoming only for one who knows how to be nobody, to no longer be anybody. To paint oneself gray on gray. (p. 218)

We paint ourselves *grey on grey* possibilising becomings in which ongoing processes are imperceptible but vitalist parts of ontological change in/on own academic practices. Motherhood being thought and reflected upon according to its multiple dimensions. The three of us writing nature–culture differences together.

To spark our work, and after growing painting m/other, we start with Patricia Piccinini’s art exhibition *Curious affection* (2018) at Queensland Art Gallery: Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA), in Brisbane, Australia. Her exhibition was enhanced by a collection of books on process-philosophy by, amongst others, Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995) and Felix Guattari (1930–1992). Processes seen as zero-point in action, only graspable in hindsight hence, always unpredictable. Knowing *how to be nobody, to no longer be anybody ... to become capable of loving ... and yet*

knowing the unpredictable, imperceptible vitalness of how to be no/body, to no longer be any/body. And still, within all our body/ness, to be and become capable of loving, m/othering in all its multiplicity. And, in this way can we (dare we?) be any/body/all body/no/body ... loving our own academic being/becoming?

In this chapter, we work in/with our togetherness and multiplicities in academia and our diversity and multiplicities in m/otherness to paint/write towards ethical-political possibilities of being/becoming m/other and being/becoming academic.

Growing Painting M/Other

From diffractive and polycritical perspectives, we write as three. We write as two. We write as one. We write from and for ourselves. We write from, for and away from our academic workplaces, and our constantly becoming academic places/spaces. We write non-algorithmic fractured stories through slowly becoming other/becoming all. Painting m/other, painting grey, so as to prevent the dialectic from slipping into our work, where forgiveness and affection, and in many ways vulnerability can reside. We ask: What becomes possible for academia if multiple re-conceptualisations of motherhood can de-hierarchize taken-for-granted structures and notions about what and who is important in academia, in teaching, in learning, in mothering? We ask how importance is produced/articulated in/for our present and our future being as academic, teacher, learner, m/other, human-being? Asking *how to be nobody, to no longer be anybody... to become capable of loving...*

Here in our, and through our, individual and collective writing, we are storying experiences of motherhood to story our experiences of academia. Through this storying, we pick-up and weave threads of forgiveness and affection as a threshold to possible re-conceptualizations of academia. In forgiveness, there is a vulnerable stillness embracing connectedness, enabling possibilities of thinking otherwise, hence the concept of m/othering. We work with our own experiences of vulnerability/vulnerable stillness as we speak of m/otherhood and academia. The stories that we write come from, and through, our *being* in these

experiences—experiences inside and outside motherhood/mothering; experiences with being/not being mother, being ‘other’. And to be clear, we speak of ‘othering’ not as a means of exclusion, but as a means of celebrating difference, as a connectedness with multiple possibilities—possibilities that take us to places, spaces and experiences beyond normative expectations. We are:

m/othering slow;
m/othering solitude;
m/othering surrender;
m/othering critique;
m/othering authenticity;
m/othering sustainability;
m/othering peace;
m/othering growth;
m/othering force;
m/othering substance;
m/othering hierarchies;
m/othering resources;
m/othering regulations;
m/othering representations;
m/othering life...

We m/other-story grief and pain, deep anxieties even and joy. We m/other-story academic hyper-performances and staging resistance. We m/other-story becoming human through motherhood, leaving behind the life of robots; sparking curiosity.

We m/other-story not being a mother, and prejudice in modern organisations, experiencing motherhood outside the norm. The value of motherhood and not. We m/other-story new sustainable pedagogies that might emerge from the imperceptible beingness of motherhood and/with/in all-ness. We m/other-story third-, fourth- and material fifth-wave feminism and womanhood, fifth-wave motherhood...

We m/other-story feelings of not belonging anymore to the workplace community that had been ‘home’ for many years before (and after, and while) becoming m/other. Such feelings grew stronger when

the benefit of unpaid leave to be home with own child was used. We m/other-story teaching small children that is seemingly positioned as less important than teaching students at higher levels. We m/other-story motherhood challenging schooling, opening to unschooling of children.

We story-m/other our—sometimes individual and sometimes mutual—experiences as examples through which to think, and to reflect, and to write on. We m/other-story motherhood as a driving force for teaching mathematics and technology to small children. It is m/other-storied as a force being reborn after becoming m/other, having always been there, however, without real opportunities to be realised within the professional life lived earlier.

Ultimately, we m/other-story the experience of academic workplace structures that give little visibility to the thematic of motherhood and limit, for many, accessible avenues for deep thinking and trans-curricular collaboration and innovation across organisations. Our stories share experiences of such limitations leading to almost daily deliberations about, on the one hand, quitting the job to gain the balance needed to function well, on the other hand, knowing that it would imply disclaiming any right to make a difference at all; and yet a third option of doing/being academic as other—other possibilities, as with our experiences of m/otherness accepted.

Our writings in forgiving m/otherness, to be clear, speak of analogies between possible themes of motherhood and possible themes of academia. It is about valuing the necessity of difference—difference which can enable collaboration and connectedness, and which can, at once, sustain the person in the act/art of mothering ... in the act/art of academia. It is about connectedness and, through such connectedness, we suggest there is a necessity for forgiveness; and with such forgiveness, embedded in connectedness, there is required an openness to vulnerability. We write about and as m/otherhood beings and academic beings, about and from inside/outside positions. And in this writing, we speak of and from new ways of mothering and fifth-wave feminism... and more ...

As a writing collaborative, we shared our stories of motherhood/ing and academia. Then we listened to each other, wrote our thoughts and read slowly each other's words. As we read/re-read, wrote/re-wrote, shared back, and waited with, and in our thinking, reflecting and

sharing of these reflections—what flowed from this process of writing was our experiences of forces and energies expressed through notions of ‘breaking out’, ‘breaking away’, ‘stepping off’, ‘stepping out’, ‘stepping in’ ... and, in multiple ways, engaging and challenging the boundaries of motherhood and boundaries of academia. We took up these notions as themes of connectedness and vulnerability as we wrote and spoke to each other, and as the text of our chapter developed. Our writing through these engagements has enabled us to think differently about our individual, and yet connected, engagements with academia and the vulnerable nature of these engagements.

This does not mean, however, that we have agreed on everything that we respectively wrote. We see that mixing different texts and different views is a literary tool to expand views, to open possibility-thinking and include each of our readers, individually, in the collaborative authoring process. Deleuze writes:

There is no subject of desire, any more than there is an object. There is no subject of enunciation. Fluxes are the only objectivity of desire itself. Desire is the system of a-signifying signs with which fluxes of the unconscious are produced in a social field. There is no blossoming of desire, wherever it happens- in an unremarkable family or a local school- which does not call established structures into question. Desire is revolutionary because it always wants more connections and assemblages. (Deleuze, in Deleuze & Parnet, 2002, pp. 78–79)

Our/Story/ing and Ethics of Affirmation

Anne:

Last summer/winter Louise and I attended Patricia Piccinini’s art exhibition ‘*Curious affection*’ (2018) at Queensland Art Gallery: Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA), in Brisbane, Australia, www.qagoma.qld.au. We went through room after room with monstrous creatures and imaginary beings and/of hybrid otherness ‘blur(ring) distinctions between normal and pathological, self and other’ (Braidotti, 2018, p. 37), and other-than-human at the same time: *Big Mother* (2005),

The Bond (2016), *Kindred* (2018)... ‘They embody ontological impropriety’. They cause thought disturbances of ‘simultaneous wonder and fear, admiration and disgust’ (Braidotti, 2018, p. 37). Through her artwork, Piccinini enacts other/self insights with ‘a combination of critique and creativity. (She) challenges us to review our preconceived ideas and socially enforced relationships with the otherwise embodied’ (Braidotti, 2018, p. 37).

Piccinini not only challenges traditional ideals of normality. She also challenges our habits of ‘*difference as pejoration*’ (Braidotti, 2018, p. 38) (Fig. 1).

Her images of monstrous maternal females mobilise anxieties about origin and reproduction, and deep-seated misogyny is also at play in the concept of the monstrous maternal body—the powerful mother figure as both breeder and potential killer. In an expanding ‘high-tech possession of the maternal - the maternal powers of reproduction having been integrated into corporate-owned, technology-based, bio-genetic and pharmaceutical production systems dismantling the mother-child continuum, separating the baby, the foetus, the embryo, from the pregnant female body’ (Braidotti, 2018, p. 44). Piccinini re-attaches the baby to the m/other’s body and restores bonds of kinship, care and tenderness. Not as a nostalgic going back, or a staying put within frames of anxiety, but as a ‘recasting of subjectivities as ways of actualizing positive scenarios that lie in store in the transformations we are currently experiencing’; nurturing ‘a culture of affirmation and joy’ (Braidotti, 2018, p. 46).

I think of my mother and me, mymotherme. Growing painting mymotherme, breeder killer mymotherme; painting *grey on grey*. Mannerist distortion of human figures and perspectives, full contrast of contours, experimenting with dimensions. I paint her small to paint me big. Space makes me small, mymotherme. We blend in together apart *to love and joy*. She taught me indirectly. I dream I do. It is hard. Oscar Wilde writes:

There is no mode of action, no form of emotion that we do not share with the lower animals. It is only by language that we rise above them, or above each other — by language, which is the parent, and not the child, of thought. ... No, ..., don’t talk about action. It is a blind thing,



Fig. 1 Patricia Piccinini (2008), *Embryo*, Private photo

dependent on external influences, and moved by an impulse of whose nature it is unconscious. It is a thing incomplete in its essence, because limited by accident, and ignorant of its direction, being always at variance with its aim. Its basis is the lack of imagination. It is the last resource of those who know not how to dream. (Guy, 2007, pp. 146–147)

This chapter is about writing warmth, joy, force, science and love on paper. A science oriented towards processes, extra-linguistic signs and materiality. An interpretative model of science in which subjectivity is/as machinic action. It is a scientific model in which nature and culture are integrated, and science is produced through axiological beliefs in and inclusion of- and with values. Syntheses are seen as wor(l)ding minds, embodied and embrained cognitions. Non-representation is/as scientific model, and that the Self and the Other is intra-interdependent parts of/in/with each other. It is a scientific model of the logics of the included-not excluded middle, inter-intra-related variations between points or lines. A science of relational ethics and hope. Or as Rosi Braidotti (2013) writes: ‘*We need to become the sorts of subjects who actively desire to reinvent subjectivity as a set of mutant values and to draw our pleasure from that, not from the perpetuation of familiar regimes*’ (p. 93).

Louise:

Working with, and from, Piccinini’s portrayal in *Curious Affection* (QAGOMA, 2018) of what it can be to be monstrously m/other, and Braidotti’s (2018) articulation of ‘an ethic of affirmation’ at work through posthuman love, I/we can tell stories of my beingness in not belonging, but always living with experiences of connection. I hence tell stories of motherhood, or just stories of being other and ‘othered’ in the experiences/spaces of mothering. With my professional/academic career as an early childhood educator and as an early childhood teacher educator and researcher, where mothering is at once revered and dismissed, and my social, cultural, familial life experiences where motherhood is an expectation not an exception—how can I not write from and through a discourse of (not) mothering/motherhood. I sit outside the spaces of motherhood and yet have listened to/experienced stories of motherhood and mothering all my life. The stories I can tell come from and through

working/walking outside the boundaries of motherhood, I am storying through difference from the norm and, at times, from social, cultural and, even, familial exclusion. My storying comes from stepping into the margins of motherhood spaces, never able to cross the final border but looking into the spaces, the socially/culturally dominant spaces; always already experiencing an 'othering', but as an informed 'other'. Until now, for me the concept of 'othering' has always had negative connotations—embedded in the notion of 'different-therefore-not-valued'. Now—plugging into Piccinini's *Curious Affection*—I appreciate with new vision, the vulnerable strength of different/other, of other mother, of m/other.

My story of motherhood: I have spent a lifetime being 'not-a-mother but mothering'. My experiences of motherhood—first, 'not-yet'; and, 'not-now'; and then, when I was finally ready for motherhood, the refrain became 'it just isn't happening' and so it was 'not-this-time'; and 'not-this-time'—over and over with each unsuccessful IVF cycle; and finally, with sad acceptance and in my own time, it was 'not-ever'; well not in the culturally contextualised way of 'being mother and experiencing motherhood'. It was then that I worked to build and accept new ways of mothering in my life. On reflection now, I find myself wondering—did this/does this—enable for me the possibility of thinking otherwise when it comes to my experience of and engagement with academia—as teacher/researcher/writer?

In many cultural contexts, the concept of motherhood and the art/act of mothering has always been a collective/collaborative experience. And yet, I perceive that in most western/modern cultures there has emerged expectations that mothers separate themselves and engage in silo-ed tasks of raising children. And where 'out-sourced' help is engaged the political argument is that this enables the mother (or primary parent) to return to the workforce—to her/his 'real' job—and so, to participate as a productive member of the economic society. Is this individualisation of motherhood linked to the recent proliferation of 'self-help' materials—books/courses/websites—focused on *doing* mothering well/properly? Can this be presented as a commodification of *motherhood* within a neoliberal world view that privileges individual achievements and productivity? And rather than being a means of *support* to those engaged in the act/art of motherhood/mothering can such

commodification of motherhood/mothering be seen as a means of social control? Can we resist compliance with normative expectations of what it means to be a good/proper mother and to do mothering as other and in other ways—through engagements in mothering as a collective undertaking? And in the same way can we resist normative expectations of what it means to be a good/proper academic, to be academically other, through similar collective undertakings in our work as academics (by this I/we mean more than just joint project work)—such modes of collective operations involve opening self to vulnerability that is a mirror of authentic collaboration.

Valuing ‘other’ ways to engage in motherhood and do mothering—a collective that involves more than just the biological mother... individualism and collective collaboration—provides a link between my experiences of m/othering and my professional life experience of academia: teaching, research, leadership and writing. Stepping away from individualism of academia—research, writing and stepping into the collective collaboration of such work requires/creates a level of vulnerability and opening self to the creative flow of trust. The experiences of trust that are involved in collective collaborative m/othering are, for me, akin to the flow of trust involved in collective collaborative academic work. Such experiences of vulnerability and trust are entangled with a willingness to be open to difference/other, and to be willing to work with, and within, difference rather than being driven by a desire to massage such difference into a universality inspired ‘sameness’.

In many ways, my experience of academia, up until recently, has been largely what I would describe as ‘competitive collaboration’ and I believe this can be seen as reflective of the current contexts of the university sector (Thomas, 2019). Contexts are driven by corporative productivity; competition for market-share of student enrolments, publication outputs and research funds. Now, this may be a necessity for the contemporary university sector, but I no longer see it as a necessity for me as an academic. More on this to come later....

Bojana:

Becoming a mother at the age of forty was for me a source of enormous new energy to realise old dreams, step out of my established academic

life, reflect deeply over the educational system I have been a part of, connect with new inspiring people of different backgrounds, and come back again as an enriched person deeply determined to follow my own path to make a difference.

This has been a seven-year-long journey so far, the most interesting one I have ever undertaken. There have been steep hills on the way, but they have enabled me some spectacular new views.

‘Would eight be too many?’, I asked my mom as a child, referring to the number of grandchildren I was planning to give her. The fascination for small children, their joy, honesty, spontaneity, playfulness and curiosity, has not left me ever since. Before my motherhood dream finally became true, I have enjoyed deep and trusting relationships with children within my family and friendship circle. Their laughter, imagination, and creative attempts to explain the puzzling world around them have given me some of the most rewarding moments in life.

As a child, I could spend hours solving entertaining mathematical puzzles, and a small wind-up robot was the first toy I bought with my pocket money. The passion for mathematics, science and technology has shaped my childhood to a great extent and determined my career choice, although deeply in my heart I always wished to become an early childhood teacher.

In my new homeland Norway, there were few organised spare-time activities for children sharing my interests. For many years, I have had a desire to fill the hole, but it was not before I took time off from work to be with my son during his early childhood, that I started to realise that dream. My two passions finally got united in the countless hours of deep involvement in/with/in play with my boy, giving rise to techno-play² workshops.

Seeing the world through a child’s eyes gives a whole new perspective to life. We become aware of all those thrilling details and beauties that surround us and realise how blind we are in our high-pace robot-like daily lives. Our knowledge comes short when the small investigator tries to make sense of the puzzling world around him, and we realise how constricted we are with cultural contexts and taken-for-granted notions. We have an urge to teach our children and shape their behaviour, but how often do we stop and listen carefully to what they are trying to tell

us, and learn from them? We teach them to respect us, but do we treat them with respect?

The insight I got through mothering, made me question the deeply rooted structures and notions of the entire educational system, and all my earlier efforts as a lecturer and educational leader. It enabled me to find the focus of my future work, where I believe I can contribute to make a difference.

Anne:

Produce some unconscious, and it is not easy, it is not just anywhere, not with a slip of the tongue, a pun or even a dream. The unconscious is a substance to be manufactured, to get flowing – a social and political space to be conquered. (Gilles Deleuze in Deleuze & Parnet, 2002, p. 78)

I was furious with my mother for years! I grew up with three elder brothers and a cute baby sister. I had ribbons in my hair from when I was born. In photos, they look like they were glued on. I looked like a little doll. I wore nice dresses. When I became a teenager, it changed. I changed. I cut my hair. I put on jeans and ugly working boots. I borrowed my father's flannel shirts. They were way too big for me and my brothers refused to say hello to me when we met in town. Oh, happy days! We discussed politics at every dinner table. This was in the late 1960s and 1970s. My mother loved these discussions and laughed when we made good points. She did not say much herself and let us children carry on. Still we always knew what she meant. She was very present, my mother.

I went off to study. I did for a long time and I never returned home except for holiday visits. The time of discussions was over and replaced by more everyday chats. I had a son in 1990 and a daughter in 1994. On my daughter's first birthday, she received a huge gift from my mother. At that time, my father had died. The gift was the biggest most feminine looking blond doll I have ever seen. The one-year-old could not even carry or hold it.

I was furious with my mother for years! 'Why did you give her that doll? It is horrible, and she cannot play with it for years!' 'Well, I was

not sure you would ever give her a doll at all, so I had to make sure she at least has one'... She had crossed a line. I felt crushed and beaten. I saw her in a different light. I tried to talk, I even told her that my daughter already had two dolls, but it seemed that whatever I said it was just barked off. I was sad, hurt and kept as much distance as I could for years. My mother. I am a mother.

I am an educator. I have learned, and I know that my profession and *bildung*³ are built on a paradox. It is the paradox between freedom and control, read discipline. I believe Wittgenstein (1997) even proposes the word *dressage* for what we need to build on substantially and education wise. It is difficult, it hurts. There are blind spots. It is violent, and gifts can be poisonous (Derrida, 1997). It is real and most of it unconscious.

I was furious with my mother for years! What gave her the right? How could she? I have lived with this feeling of being corrected for years and now I knew as both educator and mother, where at least some of it came from. But why? Did she know something that I did not? What were her experiences? What was her mother like etc. etc.? I guess I could go on asking? I could even ask if she loved me or not, but I know she did, and maybe that is why?

We produce not with a core from which we emerge, nor with the people who attach us to it, nor with images that we draw from it, nor with any structures of development or growth. We produce—'with the scrap of placenta which we have hidden, and which is always contemporary with us, as raw material to experiment with' (Deleuze, in Deleuze & Parnet, 2002, p. 78) (Fig. 2).

What did she know from life, with life? What did she know from and with female life, from and with motherhood life bringing up these five boys and girls? What did she not? What became her productions, becoming me?

What do I know from and with my life? What do I know from and with female life, from and with motherhood life bringing up these two pearls of mine? What do I not?

What has become my productions, becoming them?

What do I know from and with academic life? What do I know from and with education? What not? What has become my productions, becoming you?



Fig. 2 Patricia Piccinini (2011), *The Welcome Guest*, Private photo

I was furious with my mother for years! I think she sensed what breaking doxa imply,—and costs it might have. I thank her for that.

I was furious with my mother for years! I think she sensed what her reality was,—and what it took. I thank her for that.

I was furious with my mother for years! I think she showed me the paradox of critique. I thank her for that.

I want m/other. It is monstrous. Did you know, that in 2016 BMW had to recall a lot of their new cars because male drivers did not want female voices on their GPS? <http://www.abcnyheter.no/motor/2016/09/13/195242013/bmw-matte-tilbakekalle-biler-pa-grunn-av-kvinnestemme>.

Bojana:

Like most small children, my son is an active, curious and creative boy with a strong desire to discover the world around him. However, he insists to do that in his own way and resists any effort of being taught.

As I watched him grow, I became more and more aware that the conventional school wouldn't give him enough space to develop.

'Nobody asks me what I want to learn. If I finish a task before the others, I have to sit down and draw. The only time I can rest at school is during dictation - in the pause between two words'. These are the words of my seven-year-old boy expressing his frustration over the class-management principles practised in his school, feeling that he is being treated as an object, rather than a person with his own interests, thoughts and feelings.

I started to reflect on the entire educational system through which I have gone, and I question the notion of all children having to learn the same things, at the same time, at the same pace, in age-segregated groups. Is this the best way to educate my child? Should I take him out of school and let him continue to learn in a natural way? What impact would it have to our lives in the country where homeschooling, and, particularly, unschooling, is very rare and highly stigmatised? Would I have energy to take the responsibility for this important task and can I take the responsibility of not doing that? Or should we leave everything and move to a place where alternative schooling options are possible?

More of Our Story/ing and Politics of Multiplicity

Anne:

I am an academic and educator. For years I have worked against letting dichotomy into my work. Therefore, I always try to create breaks, tensions, strangeness and diversity with my writing. I twist words and grammar; I put in some jokes or stories that seem not to belong. You have already seen one about the female voice in the BMW. It belongs, but not and other, *mymotherme...*- and here is another break: Tax lists in Norway are published every year in national and local newspapers. The list for 2017 shows that men are getting richer, women poorer in our country—one of the richest in the world (Ødegaard, Rasmussen, & Bære, 2018). It is not surprising though: It is what

Thomas Piketty (2014) through his focus on structured wealth and income inequality in a worldwide economic perspective has documented, but here shown in a gender perspective. In academia, transdisciplinary work is prevented by structure and culture. Traditions, epistemic inequalities, going on and on https://www.forskningsradet.no/no/Nyheter/Norge_trenger_tverrfaglig_forskning_men_ny_studie_viser_at_struktur_og_kultur_star_i_veien/1254038916467/p1174467583739.

That is why I monstrosly m/other—to think more... mymotherme through *affirmation and joy* becoming *nobody, to no longer be anybody*. I Try. Again Oscar Wilde writes:

That is what the highest criticism really is, the record of one's own soul. It is more fascinating than history, as it is concerned simply with oneself. It is more delightful than philosophy, as its subject is concrete and not abstract, real and not vague. It is the only civilised form of autobiography, as it deals not with events, but with the thoughts of one's life; not with life's physical accidents of deed or circumstance, but with the spiritual moods and imaginative passions of the mind (...). The best that one can say of most modern creative art is that it is just a little less vulgar than reality, and so the critic, with his fine sense of distinction and sure instinct of delicate refinement, will prefer to look into the silver mirror or through the woven veil, and will turn his eyes away from the chaos and clamor of actual existence, though the mirror be tarnished and the veil be torn. His sole aim is to chronicle his own impressions. It is for him that pictures are painted, books written, and marble hewn into form. (Guy, 2007, pp. 154–155)

Bojana:

Taking the benefit of unpaid leave to get involved into m/othering was not socially accepted at my man-dominated academic workplace, and there was a high price to pay. Coming back to work, I felt that I no longer belonged to the workplace community that had been my 'home' for many years before. It was not easy to get acceptance for the new thoughts that have evolved through m/othering: Why should the university be involved in rethinking the education at lower levels? And how can the collaboration with early childhood teachers improve our teaching at university?

My recent decision to reduce my academic position to 50% was a trade-off between the need to slow-down and make space for a more human life, and retaining the possibility to make a difference in the areas of my academic interest. I hope it will enable me to establish the balance I need to feel well, to be a mother that I want to be, and pursue the academic work I believe in, with the required slowness and transdisciplinary collaborations.

Anne:

Postulate 55. When the mind imagines its own weakness it necessarily sorrows. (Spinoza, 1996, *Ethics*, p. 99—part III)

Last autumn I changed jobs. I had to break away from a type of academic robot-like logics of linearity that did not allow me other. That is, I did other, but not without costs. A silence gradually surrounded me, made me insecure and sad. Made me institutionally invisible even though I think I almost academically hyper-performed. Always top three on publication lists, always ‘yes, yes, yes’ to colleagues and students, my bodymind eventually saying ‘no, no, no’. It was tempting just to stop. Monstrously other...

Postulate 53. When the mind considers itself and its power of acting, it rejoices, and does so the more, the more distinctly it imagines itself and its power of acting. (Spinoza, 1996, p. 99)

I work as hard now, but I academically stage my resistance with a vulnerability m/other. I thank her for that. I paradoxically voice my thoughts louder and clearer as I write my academic life. I try to philosophise, to lay bare connections between words and worlds, proposing a view of texts as expression and action, and of writing as an act of acknowledgement.

Louise:

Three years ago, I chose to withdraw from employment in the university sector. As I have done many times before in my professional (and

personal) life, I worked to reinvent myself—that is, I recalibrated my *being* in the flow of my constantly becoming self. As I have written elsewhere (Thomas, 2019), I have stepped away from employment in a university context, but in no way do I see myself as stepping away from the work of academia. So why did I make this move? While working in the university sector I experienced positive working partnerships, I constantly matured as a thinker, writer, researcher—with significant support and challenge from colleagues. And I also, slowly but surely, felt myself losing my visibility as an academic—picking up on Anne’s earlier reflection, I felt myself becoming academically invisible, while becoming very much (too much?) institutionally visible. I was providing institutional leadership and scholarship, I maintained a high publication output for my level and employment focus, and I had a long record of engagement in time-intensive grant applications. I was, at the same time, experiencing little opportunity for *my* academic voice to be heard. But I, at no point, felt a desire to stop—I just wanted ‘other’. I had a strong (and vulnerable) sense of the possibility of this ‘other’. I knew, at the time, that I had the strength and willingness to embrace the uncertain vulnerability needed to make the necessary move to be ‘other’ in my academic life—and for that I thank my experience of m/otherhood.

This Is Not an End

We are academics and researchers. M/othering challenges, not only our concepts of data and data production, but also offers us ways of asking how far the metaphors of ‘information’, ‘knowledge’, ‘analysis’ and even ‘thinking’ help us to characterise what we explore, the research and sciences we perform, let alone how we value subsequent research and knowledge productions. In m/otherness, there are different operating conceptions of knowledge from those inherent in subject-based learning. We ask, how then to decide what these are and how to assess and/or value such works? Seeking a critical assent to what is produced; we suggest that constructs and metaphors from philosophy and literary theory—for example poeticizing—a joke or two—may serve to add something more to traditional approaches to knowledge and knowledge



Fig. 3 Patricia Piccinini (2016), *The Bond*, Private photo

creation. Opening up new opportunities towards democratization of knowledge; multiplicities of knowledge, and knowledge creation, and a multi-vocal university. In spaces of petabytes and algorithms, we think of a science and research processes in need of moving beyond theory-based models and traditional scientific methods. Rather than limiting ourselves to information, knowledge, analysis and thinking, we speak of, and try to experiment with, the concepts of data philosophy, poetization and transdisciplinary speculations for transparency, sustainability and open government (Reinertsen, 2018; Thomas & Reinertsen, 2019)—our *curious affections...* our *slow scholarships...* our *m/otherness...* (Fig. 3).

Her hands seem to be thinking care. Othering care. Can hands think? She seems to wor(l)d a child.

M/othering a child. What is a child? What is a mother? What is other?

Not found in science, but produced in poetry?

There seems to be ghosts. M/othering ghosts. How to design research poetry growing other, playing towards a future?

In *Nietzsche and philosophy* (Deleuze, 2006), the child is presented to us as aeon (time), a force through which ‘the double affirmation of becoming and the being of becoming’ (p. 23) occurs.

As m/other, as academic, we place ourselves in the world as if that is the meaning of life itself, and drift along.

Every step I take remains in the body as a map in which I myself am the scale, with consistencies and smells, colours and noises, and the patterns that are formed gradually embrace more and more of the globe. Philosophy becoming techné and spoken by life. *m/othering in all its multiplicity becoming any/all/nobody...* *loving our academic being/becoming...*

Notes

1. [En.m.wikipedia.com](https://en.m.wikipedia.com), retrieved June 11.
2. These can be read about in A.B. Reinertsen (2018) in Springer International Publishing AG, part of Springer Nature 2018 A. Cutter-Mackenzie et al. (eds.), *Research Handbook on Childhoodnature*,

Springer International Handbooks of Education, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-51949-4_22-1.

3. **Bildung** (German: ['bildʊŋ], “education, formation, etc.”) refers to the German tradition of self-cultivation (as related to the German for: creation, image, shape), wherein philosophy and education are linked in a manner that refers to a process of both personal and cultural maturation. Both Georg F.W. Hegel (1770–1831) and Wilhelm von Humbolt (1767–1835) wrote extensively on the theme as both existential and as lifelong processes of human development, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bildung>, retrieved July 6, 2017.

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Mentoring in the Academy Between Academic Mothers

Tina Yngvesson, Susanne Garvis
and Donna Pendergast

Introduction

Many women who are working and studying at universities are also parenting. Given the shift in many universities towards public management ideals within corporate-based models, structural and cultural changes are also transforming the academic lives of women and

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in Gender and Education, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-38211-7_7

by default, that of their families. By mothers coming together within the institution, the university can also become a site for empowerment with the sharing of identities and experiences (O'Reilly, 2010). In this way, the chapter provides an example of this empowerment through the exploration of care and compassion that has been passed on from one woman to the next. The identities of academic motherhood (work-life) help situate the personal and professional experiences faced as working mothers within the context of caretaking. The chapter advocates for care between women to become visible so that it can provide long-term visions as well as tools for others to develop policies and practices that can be responsive to the needs of academic mothers. The three voices presented are at various stages in their career and show the modelling of caring circles. Employing Schwab's flights from the field as a reflective tool, the voices show the importance of respecting and mothering modelling as it is learnt and passed on to others for implementation, growing care and compassion in the workplace. The chapter concludes with key ideas we suggest are important to bring to the surface to change the traditional academy. In particular, we suggest that flights from the field are an important reflective tool for generating new ecologies of mothering in the academy through mentoring. The tool also provides opportunities to challenge and push back on patriarchal structures in the academy through informal support.

Literature

Research suggests that a high performing—and caring workplace culture, can have a positive effect on work as well as in leading a positive life (Kossek, Lewis, & Hammer, 2010). Through care in the workplace, people are recognised and properly responded to, helping them feel connected to their colleagues and work tasks (Miller, 2007). This approach advocates for a collective good that is based on developing an “ethical society” (Tracy, 2008, p. 171) where the well-cared for individuals are fundamental to the success of an organisation. As such, we believe academia provides important spaces to acknowledge the multiple identities of women and foster a sense of compassion and productivity.

Previous studies of academic mothers have highlighted the tensions at play in academic settings. Women in academia are less likely to become parents than other professional women, remaining single for the purpose of achieving career success (Mason, Wolfinger, & Goulden, 2013). Women are also more likely to be represented in less prestigious teaching institutions and in less secure positions (adjunct/part-time) (Mason, 2011; Mason et al., 2013). This suggests that the professoriate level and university leadership are heavily male-dominated profession and creates a “chilly climate” for women faculty (Isgro & Castañeda, 2015). There has been little space given to women who also perform motherhood within these spaces. We suggest that by exploring the experience of mothers in academia, we also reflect on the overall culture for all people in academia. We advocate that through care, all individuals can thrive and feel connected to each other and their work.

One dominant theme from the literature for academic mothering has been work-family balance. The research suggests that women experience high occupational stress, with mothers experiencing heavier workloads as they manage multiple roles and juggle home and working life (Kossek, Kalliath, & Kalliath, 2012). Academic careers are time-consuming and often call for total dedication to faculty life (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012), while, on the other hand, motherhood is also seen as greedy and needing intensive commitment to the role of mother (Marotte, Reynolds, & Savarese, 2011). The tension is visible for many mother academics, going against the notion of being an “ideal worker” who is solely focused and dedicated to the job (Hochschild, 1997). The norms of “ideal worker” are reproduced when students further see current academic structures where “a de facto requirement for inflexible, full-time devotion to education and employment and a linear, lockstep career trajectory” (Mason, Goulden, & Frasch, 2009, p. 1). Students are socialised through their own experiences and begin to question if they should also pursue an academic career at the expense of having a family in the future (Austin, 2002).

For some women, strategies to manage occupational stress mean they engage in negative stress management behaviours, smoking, drinking, indulging in food and limited exercise (Michailidis, 2008; Vancour & Sherman, 2010). However, some women have been able to find positive

strategies by seeking out peer mentors that affirm one's work and create spaces fostering a more collegial work environment (Goeke et al., 2011). In the book *Mothers in Academia* (Castañeda & Isgro, 2013), examples of women working together to create support for each other illustrated the power of women as peer mentors. The culture for mothers includes noticing, connecting and responding to the various needs of people on campus (Miller, 2007).

We believe that care in the academy is important for all individuals. Such an approach also acknowledges that mothering can be done by anyone in academia, including men and women who may not have biological children, allowing the embracing of diverse identities and experiences. Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012) suggest that creating care starts with better integration between work and family. This includes the options to extend leave and release time, create more flexible times to work towards tenure, make childcare available on university sites, university staff who oversee work/life issues on campus and having clear and transparent communication about policies and procedures. Taken together, the literature affirms that “[B]eing a mother does not need to be a career killer” (Isgro & Castañeda, 2015, p. 180), however, existing research also shows that faculty may not feel free to use such family-friendly policies (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012) because of workplace norms and traditional academic cultures. The challenge then begins with the need to focus on the changing of workplace culture and structures within what might be existing policies.

Focus of Study

This particular self-study focuses on the mentoring experiences enacted by the authors, three mothers, as we navigate the tension-filled spaces in the academy. A particular focus is made on how care, solidarity and passion are enacted to create circles of support throughout different stages of career in the academy. Our narratives of experiences create possibilities for units of analysis.

The initial circle is created through informal mentoring that has been passed on within a group of mothers. Informal mentoring is described

as a way to support junior staff to allow a “micro-level knowledge producing community of practice” (Singh, Bains, & Vinnicombe, 2002). They are:

Voice 1 is a senior professor who has a teenage daughter. She is in a leadership position and has been awarded for her doctoral supervision. Voice 2 is a younger professor with a 1-year-old daughter who was mentored by voice 1 during her doctoral studies and early career. Voice 2 employed voice 3 as a research assistant and supervises voice 3 in her master studies. Voice 3 has two young boys (aged 6 and 3) and had a career before moving into the academy to pursue further study. All three voices have struggled with the tensions of being a mother in the academy and often shared personal and professional stories as a way of sharing understanding and providing support. Voice 1 is located in an Australian university that has policies around parental leave and implements support programmes for women. Voices 2 and 3 are located at a Swedish university. In Sweden, there are state policies around parental leave and leave to care for sick children. There are limited policies at the university that specifically focus on mothers at either institution. However, there are general statements to support parents in the workforce that are enacted by the institutions.

Sharing our own experiences of motherhood in the academy to be reflected upon through the sharing of personal testimonies is an approach advocated as opening up social justice agendas. As Bernal, Burciaga, and Carmona (2012) state:

[S]cholars are increasingly taking up *testimonio* as a pedagogical, methodological and activist approach to social justice that transgresses traditional paradigms in academia. Unlike the more common training of researchers to produce unbiased knowledge, *testimonio* challenges objectivity by situating the individual in communion with a collective experienced marked by marginalization, oppression, or resistance. These approaches have resulted in new understandings about how marginalised communities build solidarity and respond to and resist dominant culture, laws and policies that perpetuate inequity. (p. 363)

Sharing experience allows us to be witness to the multiple lived personal experiences of being a mother in the academy and allows others to see the diverse ways of supportive practices. From such a position, motherhood does not inevitably need to be a negative or liability (O'Reilly, 2010), rather the university can benefit from having a place for caring, passion and solidarity that promotes spaces for respecting dialog, working towards common goals and modelling inclusive behaviour. In this chapter, we implement “flights from the field” (Schwab, 1969) as a form of reflection and mentoring to generate new ecologies of mothering. We believe the form is suitable to all in the academy engaging in mothering (women and men). In this chapter, we reflect on our experiences as biological mothers working in the academy.

Flights from the Field

The divide between theory and practice of academic research collaboration comes to the forefront, as Schwab (1969) highlighted in his notions of “flights from the field”. What becomes noticeable is that the practical and theoretical differ in relation to methodological approach, sources of problems, subject matter and outcomes (Garvis, Pendergast, & Keogh, 2012). Schwab (1970) argues that theoretical outcomes lead to knowledge claims that are “durable and extensive” (p. 2) and that they are sourced from problems of theory where what is known. Focus is also directed to what is *not* known. Alternatively, problems about practice come from a different source. They are “indefinitely susceptible to circumstances and ... highly liable to unexpected change” (p. 3).

In sharing our own narratives of mentoring in the academy as mothers, we engage in personal reflections that explore our own perceptions and experiences drawing upon Schwab (1970) six flights from the field to prompt our reflection:

1. General flight from the field (“A translocation of its problems and the solving of them from the nominal practitioners of the field to other men” [p. 17]).

2. Flight upward (“from theory to metatheory and from metatheory to meta- metatheory” [p. 17]).
3. Flight downward (“an attempt by practitioners to return to the subject matter in a state of innocence, shorn not only of principles but of all principles, in an effort to take a new, pristine, and unmediated look at the subject matter” [p. 17]).
4. Flight to the sidelines (“to the role of observer, commentator, historian, and critic of the contributions of others” [p. 17]).
5. Flight with marked perseveration (“a repetition of old and familiar knowledge in new languages which add little or nothing to the old meanings embodied” [p. 17]).
6. Flight (debate that is “eristic and contentious...[with] warfare of words among contending exponents of [for example], different theories of personality” [p. 18]).

The initial prompt for our stories was around the dual identities of being an academic and mother. We started with stories of working in the academy after having children, before moving to complex stories around problems encountered. The sharing of these prompting stories continued until the current period of time. Through numerous meetings and writings, we would share, discuss and reflect, engaging with the six flights on our experiences of the stories. Each time a person shared an experience relevant to being an academic mother, we would prompt the experience with the other reflective flights to find deeper meaning and understanding within the notion of mentoring. In particular, the flights to the sideline would allow possibilities for deep reflections on how we supported each other in the academy and provide difference of opinion about the same experience. The final flight also provided opportunity for developing strategies after the experience. Engaging with all the flights created a form of deep mentoring for the voices that provided space to reflect on the realities of the patriarchal structures of the neoliberal university.

This approach led to the creation of more stories with more questions and reflection (a cyclical approach from the reflective prompts in the flights). The flights we undertake have not generated an academic, distant, third-person, objective voice (Tynan & Garbett, 2007) where lived

experience has been removed. Similar to Tynan and Garbett (2007) and Garvis (2014), we have found that reviewers of this approach often ask for more theory and explanation at the cost of personal stories of lived experience. Striking a balance is difficult but it is hoped that our stories of the lived reality in the academy as mothers may provide benefit to others. We have chosen to privilege snippets of our personal vignettes from our own writings.

After we engaged in our own individual and joint flights, we combined our writing to explore similarities and differences. Data were collected over the space of two months by each researcher writing reflective notes and observations around their experiences before and after meetings. From the data, we were able to find key themes that emerged across the majority of meetings. Interestingly, the themes were not dependent on culture or context as we had all experienced being a mother in difference universities and different countries. Furthermore, our experiences were at different stages of career, again showing the commonality of being a mother academic, regardless of career time frame.

From the themes, we have been able to create future considerations for supporting mothers in higher institutions. We include reflective vignettes below based on our flights from the field experiences based on the three main themes that emerged.

Key Themes Across Flights from the Field Personal Reflections

Mothers Being Allowed to Bring Children onto Campus

One of the strongest themes to emerge from the 3 voices was providing a space for children on campus. The theme emerged in the initial writing of the individual flights, before being prompted over and over again in meetings with continued reflections. The 3 voices had all taken their children to the university and encountered varying experiences in doing so. Voice 1 began the practice a long time ago, that voice 2 had observed. The creation of circles to support mothers and support other

mothers emerged. The circles have developed over a number of years; however, their influence continues and grows.

Voice 1: My daughter is sixteen years old. Last week she was in my office, reading her novel at my meeting table while I conducted the work of a dean in a large faculty. She had come to work with me for a day during school holidays, a tradition we have honoured since she understood that this was a special place to be with her Mum while she works. She loves coming to the office with me and regards it as a privilege. She loves that the staff know her and comment on how much she has grown and ask her about her holidays and hobbies. On our way home, she said to me that she hoped that she would have a job where people were as kind, clever and funny towards each other as those in my workplace.

Voice 2: I have always welcomed children into the academic space, as a sign of respect and acceptance of their independence, learnt from voice 1. This includes providing space for working parents when needed to bring their children to meetings or class to allow them to participate. After having my own daughter and returning to work part-time when she was 3 months old, I felt the tensions from another side of being a parent bringing a child onto campus.

I had a very important research meeting. Some of the participants were also working mothers and asked if they could bring their children to the meeting. I did not have a problem with this and actually encouraged it as it allows the travelling mother to feel safe and also provides possibilities for mothers to breastfeed. Voice 3 also had a sick child at the time and asked if she could bring her child to the meeting. No problems I said- it will give my young daughter some company. So, in the meeting we ended up with 3 kids from 3 different countries who were more than content to entertain themselves during the meeting and not bother us or deter us from our important cross-cultural research work. At lunch time we all went to the cafeteria and sat with some children in the high chairs and again continued the research discussion over lunch. The group was not loud or disruptive. It had been a productive meeting.

In the afternoon I was approached by three staff members who loudly announced, "Children are not allowed on campus". I said sometimes rules need to be bent and that the children in the room did not affect the outcome of the work, rather it allowed the working mothers to participate in

the meeting and continue their important research". One person said to me that the child should be home with another relative (such as another parent) and that the babies could have had bottles instead for the day. I was taken aback as I started to realise that my colleagues did not share the same stance on supporting working mothers in research and breastfeeding as what I did. I decided to stand my ground as suddenly this issue was also about me. I was trying to show compassion and care to others, yet bringing children on campus appeared to cross the threshold. The children weren't there full time or making a noise, however the small encounter with children seemed to turn other staff into strict rule enforcers. Also, why were we not respecting children enough that they are allowed to be in that space and participate?

Creating a space for children on campus also included bringing photos of children and their creations into the office. Voice 1 reflected on the artwork in her office and how it displaces the combined identity of mother and academic as one mindset.

Voice 1: My office displays her gifts of artworks, mapping her journey from a tiny person into a young woman. There is a painted heart made from her hand-prints as a toddler, a drawing on A4 paper of our family and above us an aeroplane with a big 'welcome home Mummy' message which she drew to welcome me home after a work trip, there are some pieces of her early script writing, photographs in school uniform beaming on photo day. There are twisted wire artworks and precious gifts collected and passed on to me to enjoy in my office while I am at work to include her in my daily, lived experience. All of these are signs I am a mother, and they are displayed for all who enter my office, alongside the typical artefacts found in an academics' office. My identity as a mother and my identity as an academic are, in my mind, not separate. I am one person. I have intentionally merged the two, so I do not feel they compete with each other and I am unwilling to switch one off to be the other. My office, with its clear display of academic/mother, is the space where people have at times shed tears of joy and at other times despair, as they have dealt with the highs and lows of academic challenges and equally life challenges. In my office people have told me of their excitement when they discovered they were pregnant, and later their utter despair when they shared the tragedy of losing their baby. In my office some people have shared the joy of promotion and others the end of their careers. My office has been a place where students have always been welcomed,

sometimes for very positive conversations and at other times for discussions that have led to serious outcomes. This space of being an academic/mother has been a safe space to have those conversations. It is a space where it is clear I am a mother and I am an academic.

The influence of the space was also reflected upon by voice 2, who initially met voice 1 in her office 12 years ago. The first flight allowed a general recount of the meeting, before moving to the position of the other flights. The experience of seeing the representation of being an academic mother created strong memories for voice 2 and also showed the importance of modelling and mentoring as an academic mother. The experience also prompted voice 2 to return to her own experiences many times of navigating the academy:

Voice 2: From my early entry into the academy, voice 1 modelled the dual identity of academic and mother. She was able to show how the two identities worked together to provide an understanding and supportive person. I particularly liked walking into the office of Voice 1 and seeing the art work her young child had drawn on the board with a short note to mummy. Higher up on the board sat the important work briefs and plans, yet it was integrated so beautifully with this little child's voice. I began to observe the respect voice 1 had for children and how mothering was just as important as being an academic leader.

The experiences from working with voice 1 created voice 2 to also implement the modelling of children on campus. Voice 3 reflected on how voice 2 showed the possibility to bring children to campus while also continuing to work. The idea of a combined identity was again enacted, providing a strong vicarious experience for voice 3.

Voice 3: Five weeks into my master's program I was recruited for academia by Voice 2. From then on, my professional life took a whole new turn and I threw myself into the work I was handed, slowly learning how to be a mother, a research assistant and a student. Voice 2 was on maternity leave at the time, and although she was not working full-time with her research, she was active and participated in the project on every level, all the time. Voice 2 would invite me for meets where she'd bring her infant along and sip coffee, talk about transnational research projects and breastfeed, simultaneously. She didn't do it for applause, she didn't do it to make a point, she did it because she had more than one thing to do at once, so she just got

on with it. It was natural and efficient and as I got to know her better, I started understanding that my return to the academy to pursue a career in academia, was absolutely a realistic possibility. Those coffee meets are to date the best part of my education.

Within this space, the mentoring of voice 2 to 3 highlights the importance of care, solidarity and passion through mentoring. In this way, modelling different ways of working provides strength and support for others as they enter the academy. While there is no guarantee that this could be transferred to all relations of female academics in the academy, it does provide an example of an important moment between voices 2 and 3 in regard to support.

Being a Mother and an Academic at the Same Time

The blended identity of being a mother and an academic was also reflected upon in the three voices. In particular, voice 1 showed how she never thought of them as separate identities, that may explain why she combined activities and roles:

Voice 1: While I have for a long time been comfortable with my identity as a mother/academic, this has not always been easy to enact and at times, I have no doubt, I have been judged for refusing to be either a mother first OR an academic first. Upon reflection I now see this was typically not of my own making, but tensions produced out of the traditions of the academy which privileges certain ways of being an academic. Being available for early morning breakfast meetings, being willing to entertain at night, travelling to conferences for several days at a time, being flexible at short notice—these are all demands that typify the work of an academic. A typical experience of this is the following scenario. I was invited to present a keynote address at a national conference interstate. My child was a toddler. My decision was always to travel with my child and with carer support, usually her Dad, who would be there during the keynote then had to himself travel interstate for another significant professional event. Just before the keynote my husband discovered his flight had been shifted and he could no longer be available for carer duties. One option was for me to pull out of my keynote. This would be professionally problematic and irresponsible. Another solution was to urgently find another carer, but there was no time.

The solution was risky—I explained the importance of the keynote to her and placed my daughter on the stage next to the lectern and for an hour she quietly constructed a massive maze out of blocks in front of 400 people. She had seen me present keynotes. I am mindful that as this younger me I was constantly choosing to be a mother/academic and not choosing between these. But it is not always easy and not always possible. And it was and is, often, exhausting.

In a month or two I am again confronted with a quandary related to the presentation of a keynote address. Again, the audience is large with more than 500 people at an event that takes me 1000 kilometres from home. I made this commitment 12 months ago. This week the date was released for my daughter's recital performance, something we have been looking forward to and which is important to us. It is at the same time. Neither event can be changed. So, this is where the mother/academic tension is most challenging, where there is no option and where disappointment and guilt poke their presence into my life – the lived reality for any working mother, indeed working parent, whether or not they are an academic.

Voice 2 had experienced similar events in her academic life where she had combined both identities as the same time in front of students and teachers. Through engaging in the flights, she began to see how this had been modelled for her. She had learnt this skill from voice 1 and implemented it into her own practices.

Voice 2: Earlier in the year I had conducted a workshop with teachers at the university and brought my daughter along. She was still very young and there were no formal care options for her (formal options start at 1 year of age for children). I had asked the students beforehand if this was ok. My daughter would stay asleep in the pram or sit in my arms while I led the workshop. The students and myself also began to have discussions about working mothers during the coffee break. They said it was good to see that at university I could model both identities, also giving them inspiration that they could pursue further study and be a parent.

Voices 2 and 3 would often talk about the identities of being a mother and an academic and how the identities sometimes align and sometimes don't. Voice 2 would share her experiences of working with voice 1 and having a role model. This mentoring experience can be seen to be further passed on to voice 3 who also talks about the juggling of

the academic and mother identity. She reflects on the idea of juggling identities and the importance of emotional reflexivity.

Voice 3: Since entering academia for the first time in 1995 aged eighteen, the roles which I negotiate in my life have increased in number and have invariably brought with them a continuum of personal and professional development. When I made the decision to leave the academy aged twenty-four, I remained away for sixteen years and upon re-entering many years later, I did so uncertain whether or not I would be able to juggle my needs as a mother and my needs as an individual. The idea of juggling it 'together' with other, like-minded mothers never entered my mind. Academia, as I knew it, was a place for the clever, the bright, the ambitious—a place where being a mother could not possibly be a positive attribute. I feel that I have discovered that this sense of self that exists in an intellectual environment, is a curious paradox. The individual self already exists in full, but the mother in academia self can belong as part of an academic environment in various degrees. As a future educational researcher, I depend on the human factor, on emotional labour and on compassion (Bergman & Wettergren, 2015). Gradual accretion of knowledge and understanding has allowed me to mindfully work with what I had already been given and elaborate it. However, navigating my own identity as a mother in academia does still, at times, conflict with my position as a student among peers. This has taught me increased emotional reflexivity, something that I feel is encouraged also through the tireless mentoring that I receive from Voice 2.

Changing Structure and Supporting Other Mothers

The final theme to emerge was around how women can support others to change the academic structures around them to support working mothers more. In the reflective flights, this theme was returned to many times in the discussions, especially with flights downwards and from the sidelines. Voice 1, as a senior leader, reflected on some of the strategies she deliberately implements for others to support working parents.

Voice 1: As a senior member of the academy hierarchy, I am positioned to reduce some of the tensions I experienced and could not control as mother/academic and to facilitate this for other mother/academics. I encourage my

work colleagues to chat about their children, as well as their publications. I am mindful about meeting times. I encourage staff to take the time to drop their children at school so they know they are happy and safe and they have a positive image of their child to hold on to for the day. I am aware that being a mother means that our time is not always available when we hope it might be. I do not expect my colleagues to attend events such as retreats which require them to be away from family overnight.

Her strategies for change show genuine care and compassion and provide modelling for how mothers can support each other. Her approach can be demonstrated in the writings below from academic mothers who advocate for similar ways of working for women in academia:

As mothers in academia, we all can work to support each other, honour requests for creative scheduling that allow us to do our best work at home and the office, encourage diversity in our scholarship that weaves motherhood and research, and chip away at the glass ceiling so that motherhood becomes more compatible with higher-education administration. (Castañeda & Isgro, 2013; Powell, 2013, p. 56)

Voice 1 also reflected on the enjoyment of seeing voice 2 also establish herself as a working mother and continue the circle of support. The flights from the field allowed a sense of reflective fulfilment:

Voice 2 and I have spent many years together since we met in the academy, first as my student and for many years now as my colleague. I have enjoyed seeing her establish her identity as a mother/academic with confidence and capability.

While voice 2 did not directly reflect on strategies, voice 3 noticed from her practices the many ways she tried to model and supports other mothers in the academy. This was prompted over again and again from the reflective flights:

Voice 3: Being a mother and being mentored and supervised by a fellow mother whose approach to any dilemma that arose was “we will figure it”, out inevitably created an atmosphere of safety and protection. At one point, Voice 2 even suggested I bring my youngest son to a transnational research meeting as he wasn’t quite well enough to be in preschool. I did. He spent the rest of the day drawing and playing with Voice 2’s daughter and another

child who was there with his mother, a PhD candidate from Holland. If the mothers were not allowed to bring their children, they would not have been able to attend the meeting.

This practice, where we would meet as academics and as mothers, allowed me to experience this sphere of my life and world and my engagement with it, as meaningful (Wenger & Wenger-Trayner, 2015) and with this safety followed a new strength; I assumed my role as an aspiring academic, feeling competent and able. Time and time again, any obstacle in my path caused by various issues with my sons that were beyond my control, were met with understanding, compassion and support. The option of bringing one or both of my children along to that sphere of my life in academia, was always there. However, as I made this emotional and intellectual shift from avoiding my role as a mother whilst on campus, to embracing it – I also felt a shift in the attitude of my peers. Some put me on a pedestal for managing to ‘do it all’, others turned hostile as a result of my securing the position of research assistant. It didn’t seem possible to just be one of them. I was in and out of two spheres (Huopalainen et al., 2019) and it was and still sometimes is, emotionally challenging.

Key Messages We Have Found in Our Stories

Through active mentoring after engaging with flights from the field, the three mothers have provided care, solidarity and passion for each other. Working together, they try and provide a space that is more accepting of children and mothers within the academy. From this, we can summarise key messages they have learnt from each other (prompted from the reflective flights) that they hope to reflect with other academic mothers. These are:

1. Role model—it is important for academic mothers to model and support other academic mothers. Through active agency and modelling, change within academic institutions is possible.
2. Conversation—maintain continuous development of said change, through encouraging the conversation. This disrupts the status quo, demystifies and normalises.

3. Visibility—make visible the roles of academic and mother by including artefacts that represent the roles.
4. Mentoring—academic mother mentoring is powerful and can be passed from one mother to another through acknowledging care. This is especially important for mentoring women entering and new to the academy to learn possible ways of working.
5. Family-friendly culture—children on campus should be welcomed as part of family-friendly cultures of academic institutions. This includes space in offices as well as enabling staff and students to bring children to campus on a needs basis.
6. Work flexibility—flexibility in the way women work in the academy while being a mother is also needed. Flexibility is needed around time and tasks. Academic mothers are able to achieve all work tasks but they need to also be given flexibility to achieve their potential.
7. Sharing—more networks are needed within academic institutions that provide time for women to meet and share strategies, stories and experiences of being working academic mothers. Stories should also be shared with students and early career staff to show that it is possible to be a mother and an academic.
8. Challenging norms—do not ignore bias and injustice.
9. Individualisation—no two situations of mothering and academic are identical hence the need to encourage policy and culture that recognised the need for individualisation.
10. Leadership—utilise sphere of influence to enable these lessons to be activated.

By sharing our experiences as mother and academic, we set out to employ Schwab's flights from the field as a reflective tool to enhance mentoring. The three voices are interwoven through a sharing of care for each other, highlighting the importance of respecting and mothering modelling as it is learnt and passed on to others for implementation, growing care and compassion in the workplace. From our flights from the field reflections, we have formulated a series of important lessons about thriving as mothers in the academy.

We also believe that this type of mentoring and support can also extend beyond females within the academy. As we have previously written, we work from a description of mothering that is inclusive of males and females. As such, we suggest that “men” are invited into the space of mothering and also offered mentoring, support and care. Through the sharing of experiences in “flights of the field” reflections, a new form of mentoring can generate new ecologies of mothering in the academy as well as open up spaces that offer a type of softness that pushes back on the harsh patriarchal structures of the neoliberal university. In the softness, care and compassion for each other become core within the academy.

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The Vulnerability of Pregnancy and the Motherhood Myth

Liisa Uusimäki and Karmen Johansson

Introduction

Before pregnancy is the image of a ‘good mother’, which often relates to the ‘motherhood myth’ (Verniers & Vala, 2018). The ‘motherhood myth’ is based on patriarchy that state that it is a woman’s duty and privilege to bear children and an ultimate representation in femininity (Goodwin & Hubbatz, 2010; Sultana, 2011; Verniers & Vala, 2018). The motherhood myth tells us what makes a ‘good’ mother a ‘good’ woman, and a ‘good’ girl, which is handed down to us by our mothers, grandmothers, aunts and other significant women in our lives.

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The problem with the ‘motherhood myth’ is in its acceptance by many women across the world, including Sweden and Australia (Abdul Aziz & Mousa, 2015; Goodwin & Hubbatz, 2010; Sultana, 2011; Verniers & Vala, 2018). These women are the so-called gatekeepers of patriarchy (Tau, 2017) whose role is to correct and teach women how to please a man, effectively considering the man’s needs before her own needs. This pleasing or caring continues with the birth of children, where it is natural for the women to place their children’s needs (and that of their husband) before their own. Hence, the challenge with the motherhood myth is that it is loaded with societal assumptions, expectations and biases reinforced by cultural stereotypes driven by insidious patriarchal agendas embedded and deeply veiled in the DNA of cultures, societies, including organisations and higher education institutions. As such, this cleverly masks the realities and cost of motherhood to a woman’s sense of self, health and in particular future financial security.

In this chapter, we have chosen to use a narrative approach (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), to tell, retell and relive our stories of being pregnant many years ago. Narratives provide us with opportunities to reflect on ‘how’ we negotiated the transitions and unfamiliar spaces during our journey through our pregnancies. To understand who we are we begin this chapter with a brief introduction about who we are and *intersectional feminism* (Feministik Initiativ [FI], 2019), that underpins our perspectives of feminism. We will then provide a brief background to some reasons and benefits for having children in Sweden and in Australia before we share our reasons for choosing to become mothers. We share and compare our lived experiences of being pregnant while interacting with the health services in Sweden and Australia. During this time, we were studying and working. We end our chapter returning to a discussion on *intersectional feminism*, and how it can provide a way forward to improve women’s rights to independence, financial security, as well as physical and mental well-being during and after pregnancy. From the outset, we acknowledge and recognise that not all women who read this chapter share our views about motherhood or experiences of pregnancy, since we all come from different cultures, backgrounds and traditions.

Who We Are

We are both born and brought up in Scandinavia. Liisa was born in Finland and completed her compulsory schooling in Sweden, before moving to Australia where she completed her university studies. She has experience working at universities in Queensland and New South Wales before returning to Sweden in 2013 working at a major Swedish University. She has a son who is 21 years old living in Australia.

Karmen was born in Sweden where she completed school as well as university studies. She has been working at a major Swedish University for the past 9 years. She has three children: one son who is 19-year old, another son who is 16-year old and a daughter who is 9 years old.

Intersectional Feminism

We align ourselves with intersectional feminisms that underpin the ideology of the Swedish political party Feministic Initiative (FI) (2019; Post, 2019b). Intersectional feminism is about human rights and a freedom from all forms of violence. Human rights is about woman's rights regardless of her 'race, age, class, socioeconomic status, physical or mental ability, gender or sexual identity, religion or ethnicity' (International Women's Development Agency (IWDA), 2018, p. 1). Intersectional feminism recognises women's reproductive rights. It is the right of each woman alone to decide to have or not to have children. It is also acknowledged that pregnancy is a particular vulnerable time in women's lives and while it is for some women and men a joyous and transformative experience for many women, pregnancy is a time of vulnerability where the physical and psychological changes can and do cause harm.

Background

The average age of first-time mothers in Sweden is 29 years old and relates to the fact that Swedish family policy encourages women to focus on their careers to ensure sufficiently high income before having

children (Social Issues Research Centre [SIRC], 2012). Interestingly, there is a growing trend among Swedish women ‘striving’ to become mothers and homemakers (SIRC, 2012). One of the reasons suggested is that most Swedish women specifically remember regretting spending a majority time of their early childhood in the kindergarten away from their parents. Secondly, experiencing their parents’ divorce—‘mistakes’ mean women wanted to avoid similar mistakes. Thirdly, the growing popularity of cooking, baking and home improvement shows on TV, radio and on social media has piqued an interest among Swedish women to become ‘homemakers’. In Australia, the age of first-time mothers is 30 years old, and among Aboriginal and Torres Islanders it is 25 years old (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), 2017). Australia’s total fertility rate has been below replacement level since 1976 (Australian Institute of Family Studies [AIFS], 2019), that is the level at which a population is replaced from one generation to the next without migration. The reasons Australian women choose not to have children relate to financial and work-related reasons and interestingly over-population (AIFS, 2019). The other reasons relate to that within some sections of the Australian society, motherhood is devalued (AIFS, 2019).

All Nordic countries have always had well known and generous family policies aimed at supporting the reconciliation of work and family life, with a strong focus on the well-being of children. According to the OECD (2018), Sweden is ranked fifth after Norway, Finland, Iceland and Denmark as the best country to have children. In Sweden, parental leave includes 480 days at 80% of one’s salary to a capped limited of 910 Swedish kronor per day. This is not the case in Australia. In Australia, the Australian Government provides 18 weeks paid parental leave at the national minimum wage. However, employers in Australia can offer parental leave payment in addition to the parental leave payment from the Government. Unpaid parental leave is dependent on the employers’ approval (Fair Work Ombudsman, 2019). In Sweden, as in Australia, women are the main recipients of paid parental leave. Women in both countries who are not in employment are also entitled to paid parental leave, although in Sweden women who are not working receive substantially less. In Sweden, ninety days paid parental leave are

exclusively reserved for men to provide opportunities to bond with their newborn child (Uusimaki, Garvis, & Sharma, 2018). Australian men are eligible for two weeks paid parental leave (Fair Work Ombudsman, 2019). In addition to parental leave payments, Sweden also provides monthly childcare benefits to facilitate in the care for the child. Low cost childcare in Sweden is available when a child turns one and relates to the generous parental leave offered (Uusimaki et al., 2018). In contrast, Australia does not provide low cost childcare; instead, there are childcare subsidies available dependent on individual circumstances (Fair Work Ombudsman, 2019).

Reasons for Choosing to Become a Mother

Our perceptions of pregnancy and parenthood play an important role when deciding to have a child. Karmen always wanted to become a mother, recalling growing up in a large Croatian family where she was surrounded by caring women, e.g. grandmother, aunties and, of course, her own mother. Croatian culture and traditions formed a major part of her upbringing in Sweden. Hence, the image of motherhood instilled at a young age and later as a young married woman was something she longed for. She explains:

Already at a young age I was longing to become a mother and raise a child, of seizing the opportunity to experience that special bond stronger than in any other relation between two human beings, the bond between mother and child. Parenthood was a constant fascination and I sought different ways of understanding it; As a young teen I often played with my cousins' children and as a young adult also chose to baby-sit other people's children on a regular basis. It was something that seemed to be a natural part of my life, where extended family, strong bonds and "the whole village raising a child" was nothing unusual.

When Liisa found herself pregnant in Australia, she felt at crossroads whether to go ahead or not with the pregnancy. Her thoughts related not to the joys of becoming a 'mum' but to the financial challenges, bringing up a child by herself for the next 18 years. Being pregnant

and a sole parent in Australia while studying at the university meant also needing to work as long as possible to save up for the months she would not be working. She also struggled with thoughts of returning to Sweden.

I never thought about becoming a 'mum' and so it was a surprise to find myself pregnant. My family in Sweden strongly encouraged me to return back 'home' reminding me of the generous parental leave provisions, free health care system, free childcare and comprehensive educational system. Fitting back into the Swedish culture would of course not be a problem since I was fluent in Swedish even after years in Australia. Yet, I hesitated, I had made a comfortable life for myself in Australia, and I had commenced university study. I decided to go ahead with my pregnancy and to stay in Australia, even after I learnt that the Australian government did not provide maternity leave or that I was entitled to access 80% of the salary I earned after giving birth. Ah well, I was healthy, and really, pregnancy surely was not such a big deal. After all, my mother had given birth to five children 'without' complications - well, not that she ever spoke about her pregnancies, and now when thinking back - I never asked.

Liisa's choice to go ahead with her pregnancy was not based on the 'motherhood myth' or wonders of becoming a mum, rather it was understanding and anticipating the cost of having a child and the stigma attached to being a sole parent in Australia. Her awareness that the Australian system did not provide the same financial support or parental leave as in Sweden did not however stop her from going ahead with her pregnancy. Nor did thoughts of complications or discrimination enter her mind or deter her from her choice of staying in Australia.

Negotiating an Unfamiliar Space

Pregnancy is a time of extensive interaction with the medical system and can be a very daunting and intimidating experience. Particularly, for women like Karmen and Liisa, who prior to 'falling' pregnant had very little contact beyond routine medical check-ups with their local doctors. Karmen's short-lived one month bliss of pregnancy was 'clouded' by unexpected pregnancy ailments. She explains:

Even though motherhood was something I was hoping for and, then, fully embraced, pregnancy was an experience totally unexpected. The physical ailments of pregnancy and especially that of morning sickness, which entered my life after the first 'happy' month was an experience of extremes. Morning sickness was for me an awful experience: Being sick, throwing up all day, and for several months. The extremes of the sickness threw me off balance and caused serious problems to my teaching, for example, not being able to remain in the classroom with the learners for a whole session was just awful. Yet, what was equally frustrating, was the lack of support from the Swedish health care system during these months. While I was expecting their role to be to help relieving the extremes of pregnancy ailments, I was on the contrary told that "morning sickness is something normal and not an illness, and no, it was not possible to receive a prescription to help diminish the extremes of it and it was not classified as a reason allowing sick-leave".

Deciding to go ahead with the pregnancy in Australia, Liisa explains pregnancy was a strange and surreal experience affecting her emotionally:

Being pregnant was a strange time, feeling both happy and healthy working and studying. Yet, I felt I had been 'invaded'; a feeling I was not alone in my being, and of course, I was not. No, I did not experience morning sickness but I did experience becoming emotional and 'teary' without understanding why. It did not help when my obstetrician explained that having 'a little cry' was an entirely 'normal' part of pregnancy. Explaining the reason for my tears as being hormonal was not that simple when it happened without any warning, and especially at the most bizarre times such as dinner with friends or even when grocery shopping at the local supermarket.

It is common throughout a pregnancy for the growth of the foetus and the behaviour of the mother closely monitored by an obstetrician in Australia and by a midwife at the local health clinic (*Vårdcentral*) in Sweden. The experiences by first-time mothers' meeting with their obstetricians or midwives for the first time naturally include sharing information about what to expect during pregnancy and knowing patient rights in the decision-making process. For Karmen, feeling constantly sick and being denied medication to help relieve the extremes of her *sickness* made her understandably vulnerable. The other concern

related to the stress and fear Karmen experienced was not be seen as a good patient and to have some knowledge about pregnancy vocabulary in order to articulate concerns. For Liisa to use too much of the obstetrician's time was stressful, particularly since the waiting room was full of other expecting mums. Hence, there was considerable adjustment in accepting the reality of one suddenly becoming an object to be monitored and probed, instead of a woman with a mind and feelings of her own, having important questions to be answered.

Being pregnant is complex, where no longer is it the individual woman and her symptoms who is at the centre, but the growing foetus. Woliver (2002) notes that, 'shifting control from the pregnant woman to doctors and other medical professionals brings with it increased power of "experts" at the expense of women' (p. 30). The focus on the well-being of the growing foetus within the woman's body and not on the individual woman's psychological and physical symptoms is often an experience of extreme vulnerability. Many women like Karmen suffer in silence, stoically disregarding their own physical symptoms and mental health needs based on the patriarchal expectation to be 'seen' as a 'good patient' and a 'good mother to be'.

There is a lot of research and general information about the so-called 'normal' physical symptoms during a pregnancy, e.g. morning sickness, insomnia, overwhelming fatigue, swelling of feet and legs, lower back pain, incontinence, heartburn and weight gain or loss. Women's psychological symptoms during pregnancy are less frequently investigated. Interestingly, however, studies suggest that one in four pregnant women have mental health problems (Howard et al., 2018). The problem with mental health disorders during pregnancy, especially depression and anxiety, is that these often go unrecognised and untreated because of the hormonal changes that take place in women's bodies and are perceived as a 'normal' part of the pregnancy (Centre of Perinatal Excellence [COPE], 2019). Some of the common psychological symptoms of pregnancy include sadness, emotionality (as experienced by Liisa), anxiety, depression, stress, which in some cases lead to the onset of more serious mental health disorders, e.g. bipolar disorder (COPE, 2019).

In recognition of women 'suffering' from pregnancy-related illnesses, Swedish women can begin taking out parental leave benefits 60 days

before the estimated due date (Försäkringskassan, 2019). In contrast, in Australia, women ‘suffering’ from pregnancy-related illnesses are entitled to 10 days per year of ordinary sick leave granted to all full-time Australian employees (Fair Work Ombudsman, 2019). The other differences between Sweden and Australia relate to additional benefits available to support the mother. In Sweden, ten days temporary parental benefits are available to the pregnant woman’s partner or the father of the child. Alternatively, it can also be the woman’s mother, mother-in-law, sister or cousin. The reason is to provide the opportunity to be present at the birth and getting to know the newborn or alternatively caring for other children in the family (Försäkringskassan, 2019). There is no such support available in Australia.

Academia and the Vulnerability of Pregnancy

The Australian and Swedish discrimination Acts prohibit discrimination or any form of harassment of pregnant women in the workplace. Unfortunately, Karmen’s reflection as a teacher and as a Ph.D. student during her pregnancy is an example that even in Sweden, renowned for its anti-discrimination laws, shows that discrimination is still very much a part of pregnant women’s and many mothers’ lives,

During my first pregnancy, I was working as an upper secondary school teacher and, then, as a doctoral student at university. During those months of teaching at school, I suffered terribly from being constantly sick, having to repeatedly run out of class to ‘vomit’. Somewhat surprised, I discovered that there was no room for adjustments in my schedule or a possibility of even slight partial relief of teaching hours in favour of other assignments. This relief might have been helpful with feeling so vulnerable. Similarly, at the university I found that there was no consideration shown to me or other pregnant colleagues; scheduling staff meetings, colloquia or seminars at more appropriate times rather than the late afternoons. Any requests for rescheduling to earlier meetings were left unheeded. There was no consideration for stressed out parents needing to pick up their young children from childcare or ‘fatigued’ pregnant women. The response from management or established researchers would simply be

that there is no such thing as an eight-hour-working days when conducting research. Thus, sacrifices such as forsaking your personal life with family or close friends, weekends and even holidays, were expected and seen as something quite normal. Advancement in academia was another obstacle for me during my pregnancy. For example, whilst our supervisors were claiming that writing articles was of the utmost importance for superseding competition for future doctorate positions, supervisors rarely asked us to co-write scientific articles. I was certainly never offered such an opportunity. At several occasions, we 'pregnant' doctoral students experienced that less educated and less merited master students were invited to co-author articles. As a woman teacher and researcher it was, unfortunately, not possible to advance or climb the 'slippery' ladder of academia. The assumption was that new, more advanced and meritorious positions would be too severe a strain on you. Hence, lucrative opportunities were passed either to other female employees who were not parents or to men. Moreover, for men it seemed to be an entirely different story, regardless of whether they were parents or not. Their parenthood seemed to stand in stark contrast to that of women's, i.e. the management did not seem to perceive any change or disadvantageous influence of parenthood on men's capability, strength or intelligence.

Karmen's experiences of workplace discrimination, resentment, suspicion and scepticism by her Swedish colleagues (that included men, non-pregnant female academics and mothers) during her pregnancy suggested that patriarchy was well and alive even in the Swedish University.

Regardless of zero tolerance and policies, discrimination experienced by many Swedish women academics who have children or are pregnant is often subtle, almost intangible. Temple (2014) calls this the 'motherhood penalty'. When women take maternity leave for a limited time, they have loss not only in financial earnings but also career opportunities. This is in contrast to men's earning potential and promotional opportunities in academia (whether in Sweden or Australia) that remain unaffected regardless if they are parents or not. Bell (2017, p. 1) suggests that barriers to women's career mobility in Australia 'rests on the assumption that academics will not take time out for childbearing or child-rearing'. There is an assumption that they will have domestic support systems behind them, most commonly referred to as 'wives', despite the fact that women academics often are the main caretakers of children and without outside family support.

Even though Swedish law prohibits differences in salary solely based on gender, the country's gender pay gap remains substantial. In Australia, while there is no law prohibiting differences in salary between men and women, the Australian Government recognize that Australian women continue to earn less than men, are less likely to advance in their careers and accumulate less in retirement or superannuation savings than their male colleagues (Australian Government, 2018).

What is interesting is that Sweden has the highest proportion of women led universities in the world, yet, a mere 25% of Swedish professors are women. The reason for the low number of professors may relate to that many women choose to have children after they have completed their Ph.D. or after they have secured an ongoing position as academics (Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research, 2016). In Australia, 27% of women are professors and 32% are Vice-Chancellors (Pyke & White, 2018; Rea, 2018). Pyke (2012) states that the reason for the low number of women is the recruitment process that favour the systematic 'gender inequality practices' and that cancel out the effect of efforts to foster gender equity. An example of gender inequality and the 'boys club' or the continuity of male privilege in the Australian higher education is that men in senior leadership positions 'attract bonuses that women did not even know existed' (Rea, 2018).

Employment and the Vulnerability of Pregnancy

It is against the law in Sweden and in Australia to dismiss women because of pregnancy. In Sweden, being dismissed because of pregnancy is unheard of, yet in Australia it is still a lived reality for many women. The following is Liisa's experience:

I worked for two different financial companies part-time whilst also studying part-time at the university. It was not until I was 8 months pregnant that I shared my happy news with my employer who herself was a mother. We discussed my pregnancy and my return to work after the birth of my child. A week later, I received a formal letter from her requesting my resignation due to my pregnancy. During this time, I happened to study a human rights subject at the university and I had a human rights lawyer as a tutor.

With advice from my tutor, I contacted the human rights commission and within weeks found myself in a mediation conference with my employer and her lawyer. Of course, the fear was that I would go ahead and make the case public, something the company could ill afford. The outcome was definitely worth it (as were the tears). I had also let my second employer, a male, know about my pregnancy and who, surprisingly, not only offered me time off, (without pay) but also a full-time position on my return, support for me to complete my studies and a place for my child at the company's on-site child-care, and all in writing.

In Sweden, being dismissed because of pregnancy is unheard of with several laws in place protecting pregnant women, these include the 'Parental Leave Act', (SFS 2015:760), (Government offices of Sweden, 2016), anti-discrimination laws and rules for termination determined by the laws found in the 'Employment Protection Act' (*Lagen om anställningskydd—LAS*) (Government offices of Sweden, 2016). In contrast, in Australia nearly 50% of pregnant women have experienced being discriminated because of pregnancy, maternity leave or when returning to work (Jennings-Edquist, 2018). To dismiss pregnant women in Australia is a relatively *easy* process. Employers simply make the position redundant and base the redundancy on organisational restructure. The problem is that it is difficult to prove discrimination because of pregnancy when reasons relate to organisational restructure. The other problem is that women especially those experiencing pregnancy-related illnesses often choose to do nothing, because of the necessary knowledge involved with submitting a complaint. A complaint needs to be written and to comply with strict timelines.

Liisa was fortunate studying a human rights subject at the university while working part-time in the organisation that sought to dismiss her. Seeking support and advice from her university human rights lawyer and tutor enabled her to take immediate action and the necessary steps to file a complaint in time with the Australian Human Rights Commission that eventuated in a positive outcome. Perhaps the outcome would have been different had she not been studying at the university, studying human rights and not had immediate access to advice.

Discussion

Intersectional Feminism and Consciousness-Raising

Intersectional feminism is the ideology underpinning the Swedish Political Feministic Initiative Party (FI), its purpose is to challenge racism, patriarchy, sexism and misogyny (Carastathis, 2014; FI, 2019; Post, 2019a), it is about human rights, it is inclusive of both women and men, and it is anti-racist. Placing feminism and gender equality firmly at the centre of policies has always been part of Swedish political life and each policy implemented has been because of the influence and action by Swedish women themselves. This may be a reason why it is common for many Swedish men to openly call themselves feminists. There is acknowledgement among the majority of Swedish men that women's issues are men's issues. In fact, all members of the current Swedish Government openly call themselves feminists (Government Offices of Sweden, 2019). Even so, there is still a long way to go to ensure equality between men and women.

Change start with consciousness-raising activities. Drawn from FI's idea of home parties to learn about feminism and intersectionality is an organised event where women and men come together in a safe environment, to discuss and raise concerns for example, discrimination, equality, men's violence against women freely without feeling judged, ridiculed or in any way humiliated. We chose our consciousness-raising activities to take place during our lunch breaks away from the university. To support us through the process of consciousness-raising, we turned to intersectionality as a framework following Timothy's (2019) four concepts: (1) All of who I am (2) Oppression, (3) Violence and (4) Resistance.

1. All of who I am

All of who I am, relate to our identities such as race, indigeneity, socio-economic status, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, (dis)ability, spirituality, immigration/refugee status, language and education. This stage involved recognising our privilege as white women from middle-class backgrounds, tertiary educated, trilingual, brought up in Sweden and influenced by Finnish and Croatian

backgrounds. We also located ourselves politically as advocates of social democracy influenced by our upbringing in Sweden.

2. Oppression

Through sharing our stories, we recognised that oppression exists even in democratic countries such as Sweden and Australia. Oppression relates to ways of knowing and doing by those with power and authority as individuals, found in governments, universities and cultural institutions that create marginalisation and subjugation of those who do not have institutional authority or power. For example, in our case we did not understand why pregnancy would result in experiences of disempowerment. Another example is the unequal treatment in comparison with non-pregnant women whether relating to opportunities for promotion, career opportunities, salary increase or job security in the university or private sector. We were both surprised at the lack of support and empathy from some of our women colleagues, even women who were mothers and employers during our pregnancies. We came to recognise that we need to come together to form conscious-raising activities that encourage women to become allies.

3. Violence

During our discussions, we considered at length the meaning of an intersectional analysis to connect the human experiences of violence, historically and to the present. Violence is any abuse of power, and according to Timothy (2019) it can be public, private and/or structural and its' purpose is to oppress and discriminate in order to inflict harm. An example is workplace discrimination against pregnant women.

4. Resistance and Actualising agency

To actualise agency requires resistance that involves the struggle to survive, exist, persist and fight to eradicate ideologies and practices of colonialism, racism and all other forms of intersectional violence regardless of race and disability (Timothy, 2019). An example of resistance and actualising agency is the Swedish version of the

#ME Too movement, considered the most important and successful feminist activism seen in Sweden since women got the right to vote 100 years ago. It began with a handful of women from the Swedish theatre and opera posting their anonymous stories of sexual harassment, assault and rape at the hands of directors, theatre managers, production companies, producers, under the #Me Too. Overnight it turned into a powerful women's movement, where women from all sectors of the Swedish society began sharing their stories. The fallout that resulted from the postings was immediate, with highly respected media profiles fired or choosing to resign on their own accord or others still under investigation including, company directors, politicians, judges, lawyers, doctors, professors and actors.

We have found the process of consciousness-raising and the use of the intersectional framework presented above as helpful and necessary to understand intersectional feminism and especially making sense of our experiences of vulnerability during our pregnancies. We have learnt that it is through our reflections that have led us to an awareness and recognition of the existence and continuing power of patriarchy in both Sweden and Australia.

'We are all born of women' (Rich, 1976), and as such we are unique. We strongly believe pregnancy is an experience of vulnerability. We believe that it is through sharing our lived experiences of vulnerability during pregnancy that can provide us opportunities to make sense of our experiences that lead to action and the courage to demand change. This will allow us confidence to reject nonsensical societal expectations such as women must quickly, without fuss and with grace get over the pregnancy, and to continue accept the role of the good mother and the unacknowledged recognition and responsibilities this means.

Conclusion

There is not a one-size-fits-all type of feminism. For us feminism is about human rights, it is about inclusion and it is anti-racist. We do not believe feminism

...benefit solely any specific group of women, any particular race or class of women. It does not privilege women over men rather it has the power to transform in a meaningful way all our lives. (Hooks, 2014, p. 240)

We as women need to become allies regardless of our individual differences and we need to take action to ensure all women's future well-being and financial security. We need to empower one another to willingly, and courageously accept the struggle to end sexist oppression and greed to ensure a just and sustainable world for the sake of our children and grandchildren. We can do it together.

We Can Affect Change

Positive changes are taking place in Swedish Universities based on current Swedish Government policies promoting gender equality (Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research, 2016). For example, at the department where Karmen and Liisa work, management has most recently implemented policies to encourage women to seek promotional opportunities. Liisa and Karmen are encouraging consciousness-raising among their colleagues at the department sharing, supporting and discussing their experiences of mothering, motherhood, and how to deal with interruptions to academic career progression due to family commitment.

After the Birth and the Realities of Return to Work or Study

Karmen decided to stay at home for eight months after the birth of her first child and then work part time the first couple of months. At that period,

she learnt that if she had not returned 'soon enough', she would have faced mistrust from her employer, supervisor as well as some of her colleagues who were all opting for prosperous academic careers. With her second child, however, she returned to her doctorate position within five months. To her astonishment, she experienced that if she had been coming back too soon—lo and behold—she would have equally been faced with mistrust; In other words: You are damned if you don't and damned if you do. Nevertheless, once back, she experienced support from colleagues as well as more flexibility to attend meetings and occasionally bringing her child to a seminar.

Liisa decided also to stay at home with her child for 8 months before returning to fulltime study opting out from work. Being a sole-parent and full-time university student was fulfilling and fun even if she was 'broke' most of the time. She felt throughout her undergraduate and postgraduate study truly supported by the university's academic staff, her peers and friends. Whenever she needed, she could bring her child to classes and even if this was stressful to her personally, at no time did her peers or lecturer make her (for bringing her child) feel unwelcome. With her child at the university child-care centre situated at the university grounds with qualified early childhood teachers and the provision of healthy home cooked Italian meals at the child-care, a sense of calm allowed her to focus on her study.

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Becoming-with as Becoming-Maternal— Writing with Our Children and Companion Species: A Poetic and Visual Autoethnographic Portrayal of Mothering Assemblages

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Bronte Cutcher, Remy Cutcher, Lily Cutter-Mackenzie
and Finley Cutter-Knowles

But,

just the two of you, and
it's quiet, and
she's perfect and
snuggly and
warm; and

the night feeds,
when it is

then she drops off the nipple
like a full leach, mouth

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Since mothering is but one part of the assemblage of motherhood, we (Lexi & Amy) felt it important to support the agency and voices of our adult children (Remy 28 and Bronte 26—Lexi) and small children (Lily 10 and Finley 5—Amy), as well as mothered animals/companions, to ‘speak’ for themselves in this work, in image and text and presence. Their voices are othered in the academy, which for all its postmodern and feminist assertions does not support notions of becoming-maternal with the actual presence of those offspring included in the work or in the places of work. Children are a distraction on campus, in our offices and in our writing—as authors and as beings who have rights and voices and agency. Yet the labour of motherhood ought not to be separated from the labour of the academy. When thinking conventionally of mothering, it is generally regarded as an assemblage of human children, often ignoring our posthuman mothering and care work. We therefore also take up the concept of mothering others with and beyond the child and outwards to companion animal species, in the unfoldings of the stories below. In this paper, we include the voices of our ‘most mothered’ as a pathway into disrupting patriarchal structures, through the presence of our children and the crediting of their contributions as co-authors of this work.

Children’s authority and agency in the ways they have been mothered are an important contribution to the literature on mothering broadly, and mothering in the academy and educational work contexts more particularly. Therefore, in this work both the written and visual autoethnographies take centre stage, the voices of all the authors present in a cacophony of stories, images and artworks, engaged and documented through a process of *Dadirri*, or deep listening to the children, to each other and to ourselves. *Dadirri* is an Indigenous practice first acknowledged in the literature by Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann (2002) of the Ngangikurungkurr people in the Northern Territory in 1998/2002. This deep listening is twofold: as a deep inner listening, engaging stillness as an awareness pedagogy (Ungunmerr-Baumann, 2002), and an attentive and quiet listening to others. Layering on this process is, we hope, the deep listening by the reader to these word and image stories as a choral gathering, thereby writing themselves into these assemblages of motherhood. This is because we view all women (and those whom identify as women) as mothers because *all* women mother in varying circumstances.

In engaging with Dadirri, listening to each other's stories and in authentically listening to the stories of our children, we dwell with the reader through the multimedia poetic, autoethnographic and visual texts. The reader is enticed by the architecture of engagement, purposefully designed (Lasczik Cutcher, 2018) to slow the reading, to listen deeply, to meditate with the multimedia texts and to linger. To walk with us through our mothering collectives.

Amy and Lexi view motherhood as dynamic assemblages (Trafi-Prats, 2018). In our autoethnographies, the *Remy-Bronte-Lexi-world* and the *Lily-Finley-non-human-mothered-Amy-world*, mothering assemblages are portrayed as a visual essay that both interrupts and illuminates the readings, as stepping stones and as critical texts. The interruptions operate as both signposts of becoming-maternal (Shildrick, 2010) and moments of meditation and transformation and pause—a concept that “encompasses all those linked together in the connective tissue that constitutes a more extensive and substantive version of the flesh of the world” (p. 7).

The mothering assemblages portrayed artfully herein are, therefore, an indicator and reminder that the extraordinary process of motherhood is subsumed and heightened by the power of becoming (Huopainen & Satama, 2019; Shildrick, 2010). The visual texts operate as intergenerational and transgenerational connective tissue, portrayed through images, story and poetry. Connective tissue is constituted of the literal between mother and child as flesh and blood and sweat and amniotic fluid and tears and placenta and uterus and piss and shit and breast milk: the materiality of the early bonds of motherhood. In this chapter, such connective tissue is portrayed through the arts-based passages (images, artworks, poetry, collages) that both transcend and are embedded in this work to slow the reading, to slow the scholarship and to linger-with, as moments of wayfinding (Lasczik Cutcher, & Irwin, 2018) and as moments of Dadirri.

M/othering in the Academy

In academic life, all women are othered, particularly if they are women of colour or otherwise marginalised, such as being of child-rearing age. Many women find that they must delay having their children until their

doctorate is done, or until they find full-time work (Rockinson-Szapkiw, Spaulding, & Lunde, 2017). Others struggle with the tenuous balance of public and private labours. Huopalainen and Satama (2019, p. 3) describe the new academia as “an intensely controlled, standardised, entrepreneurial and arguably neoliberal masculine working context”.

The literature is vast and clear on the marginalisation of mothers in the academy, on the inequities of pay gaps, and opportunities for promotion or tenure (Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019; Donath, 2015; Huopalainen & Satama, 2019; Trafi-Prats, 2018). Women are less likely to become full professors (Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019), feel guilt and fear often related to their work (Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2017), are less likely to achieve tenure if they have babies within five years of graduating from their doctoral programs (Thorstad, Anderson, Hall, Willingham, & Carruthers, 2006), the work-life balance of maternal and professional tensions persists as a constant strain, as does the burden of household labour (Huopalainen & Satama, 2019; Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2017), and the early career of an academic of intense productivity and expectation coincides with the mothering years (Huopalainen & Satama, 2019).

Amy and Lexi have indeed been othered in workplaces in the above ways since birthing our human children, by virtue of our status as mothers and the conflicting expectations of us as academic mothers, which is a highly challenging path to navigate (Huopalainen & Satama, 2019). It hasn't been an easy path.

Although we may be considered to have ‘made it’ in academic life (we are both professors), it has not been without significant personal sacrifice. We most often work 50–60 hour weeks (and more) in order to ensure our research productivity and to fulfil teaching and service commitments. We have both been strategic in where we choose to direct our considerable energies and committed work ethic, and have sought to create balanced portfolios, because this is what it takes in the contemporary academy to advance. Our professional successes have thus been anything but ‘luck’ as Diezmann and Grieshaber (2019) might suggest, and with which we take deep exception; rather we have exploited our opportunities with vigour, rigour and hard work. We wonder if our sacrifices have adversely affected our children and worry about this constantly.

This is not to say we do not acknowledge our privilege—at first blush we indeed have inexorable advantages in that we are educated, are white, have tenure and opportunity. Being able to do this work is in itself a privilege, and we respond to this through the nature of our work, which has deep social justice and diversity imperatives. We have also responded to our privilege by being proactive and purposeful, strategic and dedicated, diligent and productive, mentoring others and taking on roles and opportunities as they appear, whilst trying to balance our lives—too often unsuccessfully.

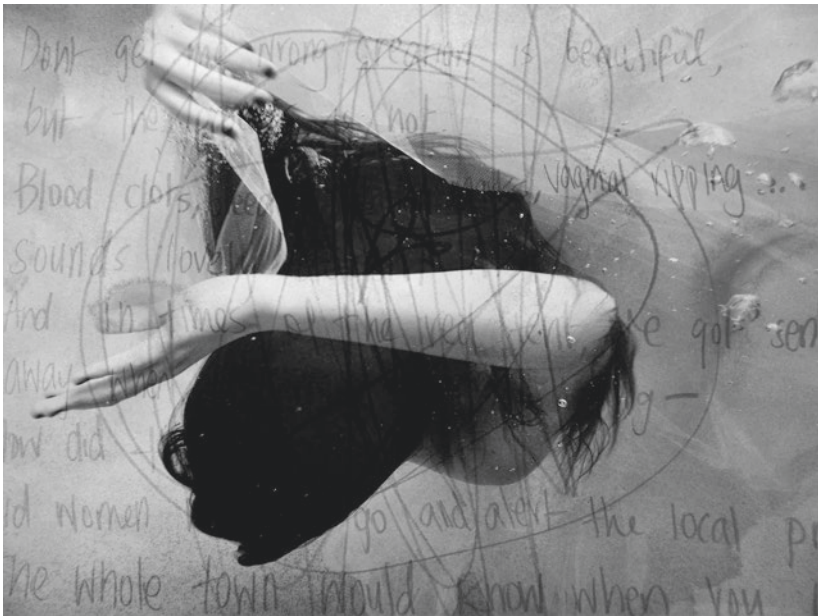
We have also indeed suffered and acknowledge the many personal crises and challenges, our diverse backgrounds, and our suffering in our personal and professional lives. We have chosen to share only a glimpse of these below because it would not be ethical to expose these elements in a paper authored with our children, and because this is also not the focus of this particular work. We do indeed mother others we work with and have been mothered by our colleagues. Yet we have also had some dreadful experiences with other women and mothers with which we work, yet we have chosen not to share all of these experiences here as that is also beyond the scope and focus of this particular chapter. Rather we offer our experiences and stories and those of our children in order to extend the critical narrative around matricentric feminism. We seek resonance and reverberations in the experiences and labour of motherhood, wherever they may exist.

Autoethnography as Method: Text and Image

We chose autoethnography as the methodology (see Holman Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2016 for a seminal source) for this paper, largely due to the storied nature of mothering, as well as its deep experiential positionings, in order to be authentically inclusive of our children's voices. The rigorous processes of writing (and in this case, designing and making visual and poetic) autoethnographies require nuanced reflexivity, creativity and emotion (Holman Jones et al., 2016), all arguably feminised onto-epistemologies. It is a making political from the personal (Holman Jones, 2005) and as such is an entirely ergonomic methodology for this work.

The autoethnography entangles both conventional autoethnographic writing with visual autoethnography, through a suite of visual and poetic essay assemblages that operate as critical passages. The reader will be able to see (or hear) the theory in the visual (Bunda, 2017) as they are both embedded in and transcend this work, diffracting in the layers of possible and actual readings (Lasczik Cutcher, 2018). The stories and images of our ‘mother-child’ assemblages below thus explore our collective experiences with the voices of the assemblages both entwined and diffracting. The reader is encouraged to read/stay with the visual and poetic works as moments of meditation, metaphor and Dadirri.

Remy/Bronte/Lexi World: Mothering, Othering and Spilling Over



Mum, Mummy, Mama, Mother:

Life as I knew it
 evaporated,
 dissolved in the processes of
 becoming-mother,
 becoming-with
 becoming-other
 someone else,
 some *thing* else.

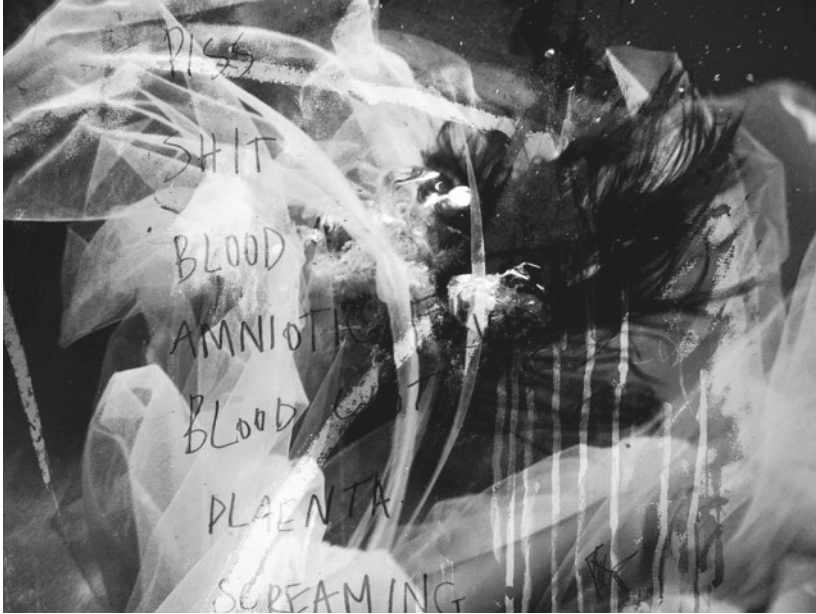
My old life burnt to the ground,
 its *not* cleansing ashes exposed
 in a neoteric,
 perplexing,
 unremitting process of becoming.
 Becoming carer,
 becoming adult,
 becoming dairy cow,
 becoming m/other.

Birthing, and
 rebirthing always.

The final hours and
 minutes of
 labour, suffering
 that interior power,
 outside of
 my consciousness,
 taking all control of
 my body in its
 contracting rhythms, its
 purpose and its
 brutal energy.

Naked in a room full of strangers,
 shit and
 amniotic fluid and
 piss and
 tears and
 tears and
 blood streaming out of me. I didn't care who saw me.
 Didn't care about
 anything except
 riding the
 swells of the
 unremitting pain and how
 I could avoid the next contraction.

I was lost in it.
 I didn't want the drugs,
 I just wanted it to go away.



My belly rock hard and
squeezing, my vulva shrieking in pain, as

the waves and waves of distress lifted me up, floundering at each peak,
only to crash me onto the shores of motherhood

again, and

again, and again;

heaving and suffering,

moaning and panting for my breath.

For 24 hours and 9 hours, respectively, I was carried away and desperately trying to survive the surges by clawing my way back to myself. The pain became its own entity, with its own agency—a force that transplanted my own. I felt utterly alone, yet simultaneously connected to the infinite, in chorus with every mother from every place and every time that ever walked, crawled, crept on or flew over this earth. In that moment of potent thrust, I was in deep harmony with the feminine,

aligned in this entanglement profoundly and to my core, through the watery cocoon inside me and the exterior delirium of the incessant waves crashing through the aquatics of my body. It wasn't a comfort, it was an epiphany.

When I came home with my babies, I felt like a trapped animal, scared shitless and wild. I wasn't sleeping, I had no time to eat, no time to bathe. My flesh was bleeding and sweating and sour smelling; my spirit as crushed as my new body. I was a captive—Remy (and later Bronte), my body and my dependant existence my invidious masters. Their bidding and demands were my mission and I was profoundly jealous that I couldn't escape it every day, like other functioning humans. I was exhausted, defeated and alone in it, with a limited and distant support network and no relief. It was all on me; isolated, frightened and confused. I felt abandoned by everything, and adrift.

Where Was My Feminism?

I didn't eat properly for months. Living on buttered apricot loaf and tea and barely sleeping, the experience of a second difficult pregnancy with a very real health scare, an undiagnosed autoimmune condition and a delinquent marriage kicked me into (also undiagnosed) post-natal depression. I didn't know what it was, but I knew I had to find a way out. As for the previous time, my emotional self lurched from blissful and enraptured adoration of my beautiful baby (and my sassy toddler), to exhausted, black, joyless, never-ending-it-seemed despair.

Bronte wouldn't go to anyone but me. She wanted to feed all the time, but she was the textbook-perfect baby and looked like a Botticelli angel. The limited quiet times we had during the hushed and whispered night feeds are the most precious of my mothering experiences. But in the early days of Bronte's life, Remy had just hit the terrible twos and demanded constant attention. I felt helplessly incarcerated, chronically sleep deprived, completely isolated and utterly defeated.

I paced inside my cage

I thought this was my forever-life. How long it would be until I could manage? How long would this blackness last? How long before I felt in control again? How long before I was on top of it all, and coping?

I didn't think I was going to make it.

WHERE WAS MY FEMINISM?

Two months later, I became aware that there was an opportunity to return to a casual teaching position, 3 days a week. It was a lifeline dangling above me, a way to reclaim some financial independence, and get back into to the land of the grown-ups for at least part of the week. Instinctively, I knew I had to find a small avenue of escape. I couldn't do it by myself any more, and I was spiralling into very dark waters.

But,

oh, the *guilt*,
the sense of abject *failure*.

I had wanted to be
a stay-at-home 'proper mother'.
How could I
leave my baby?
She was so little and still so dependent on me.
I felt so deeply guilty,
I knew that breastfeeding
and working was a challenge
to manage, and
that I'd have to be super organised if
I went back to work.
I knew that it would
mean getting my babies out of bed early,
to then front a long day and come home tired,
cranky and uncooperative. And
I knew there was no other way if
I was to survive.
I weaned Bronte and
I took the job.



The juggle between home and work, the private and the public, felt impossible; it was exhausting and trying and hard. But it was also the only way I could *do* motherhood and maintain my sanity. I was always down-to-the-bone worn-out, always feeling like I was doing it all wrong, always feeling guilty—but I did feel rational and stable and sane. The guilt was always there but it came almost irrelevant with time, because I didn't have time for it and knew deep down that I was a much better mother than if I'd stuck it out and stayed at home. I couldn't help myself, I was a worker.

I got my Masters and then my Ph.D. I did both degrees working full-time for almost the whole time. I gave up sleep and struggled to ensure my selfish studies didn't impact the girls too much. I wanted to be a present mother, as much as I could. I completed my Ph.D. by distance and graduated in 5 years. It ignited something else in me. Later, after seven years of feeling like my life was a scattered portfolio of secondary teaching, writing, art making and yearning for a scholarly life, I finally secured a job as an academic after 6 attempts at other jobs that probably weren't for me. I dropped my salary considerably and left my leadership position, and felt like my life could at last begin again. I thrived in the academic environment. I was finally home.

It has not been an easy climb. I have given up sleep again, and I work so much. Such long hours and so much effort. It is compelling work, and I love it but often it consumes me and I can't put it down. I tire, but I go on. I have a hunger in me, an ambition rooted deeply in self and soul. I have been fortunate to have had great career advice, which I have taken into my heart and acted upon with delight, raw fear and focused determination. A child of migrants, I am first in my family to ever have walked this academic path. Nothing has been handed to me, other than the free education I received with my first degree—and for that I am grateful. Everything else has been a result of my own sweat and blood and tears and effort, with only pretty words of support to help or sustain me. And I have had to navigate so much shit in my professional and personal life, and it keeps coming at me

thick, and fast. So much for feminism—whilst there are so many wonderful, helpful, generous women in my life, there has been an equal number professionally who want to take me down. Aren't we supposed to hold each other up? Especially the mothers? My girls still need me at 28 and 26, but it is gentler and less arduous; they are fiercely independent, strongly career focused, deeply loving and quite uninterested in what I do.

But I worry,
(always the worry),
a
mama warrior and
a mama worrier and I
wonder about the impact of my choices
on them. Becoming-maternal with them,
I wonder:
have I modelled to them
an impossible life?
A life of
relentless searching? Of
relentless work?

That,
this is the only way to do life,
to *do*
motherhood?
To take it *all* on?

But,
their paths
are their own,
and as I remind them often:
yes
you can have it all, if you are willing to work hard for it.

But just not at the same time.



*You worry too much mama,
you keep asking
this stupid question!*

*Yes mama, we had a happy childhood.
Yes mama, it was ok,
yes, more than enough.
You did all of the things and
went to all of the things you could, and paid for
all of the things and later collected our
drunken selves late into the night.*

*It was annoying that you couldn't
do tuckshop every week like the other mothers, but
that's it.
That's all, really.*

*Instead, you taught us about working hard,
about sex
(about all types of sex),
about how to handle bullies,
about earning money for chores*

*we didn't do,
about how to study,*

how to make dinner and to do laundry

*and make our own school lunches.
Us cooking a meal each once a week didn't go so well, but
stop it with your weird mothering guilt.*



My anxiety can be trying at times, and I have put her through a lot, moving to Perth for almost 4 years, countless relationship issues, travelling often and far away from home. She is always there to support me, help me when I'm in a bind half a world away and she loves me even when I have turned away from her, wounded her or ghosted her. She is my anchor, and I am grateful for her every day. She has taught me you can find love at any age, that if you work hard enough you can have a good life, and never to wait for a man to determine your fate (that one has been a harder lesson). If you want a car, buy a car she's always said; if you want a diamond, buy it yourself. Don't wait for a man to do things or buy things for you; work hard, earn your own money and get it yourself. Build your own life and be financially independent. Mother like you want to, not like your husband wants you to, and work if you want.

But. She has pushed me to do things she wanted for me, that I didn't choose. And one of those things was Art – she wanted me to be an artist, and I think that was for her, not for me. I did Art all the way through school because she encouraged it, and I thought I had to live up to that because it is her passion. The thing is, I loved Art when I was little, drew constantly, had journals I would take with me everywhere, and never stopped scratching marks onto paper. Mum took my early drawings and copied them and made them into paintings, from my first abstract paintings to my little bubble-like creature-people, through my black-red-purple-textas-only phase, to my drawings of miniature house and garden scapes, to my huge pile of journals full of images and writings that I just ceased to use suddenly, about age 12. I was prolific for my whole childhood and then I just stopped. I have no idea why. I drew back on these things for my Year 12 artworks, but I only did Art in Year 12 because it was expected, not because I wanted to, and I know she wanted me to do a Visual Arts degree. It wasn't for me; I wanted to make money so I could travel. I chose nursing, so yeah, a science degree. Against everything she'd prepared me for – although she did say that it didn't matter the degree just that we had to get one. But no more study for me. That isn't going to be my life. Funny thing is, I've taken up painting again, just for fun, and just as a meditation. It helps.

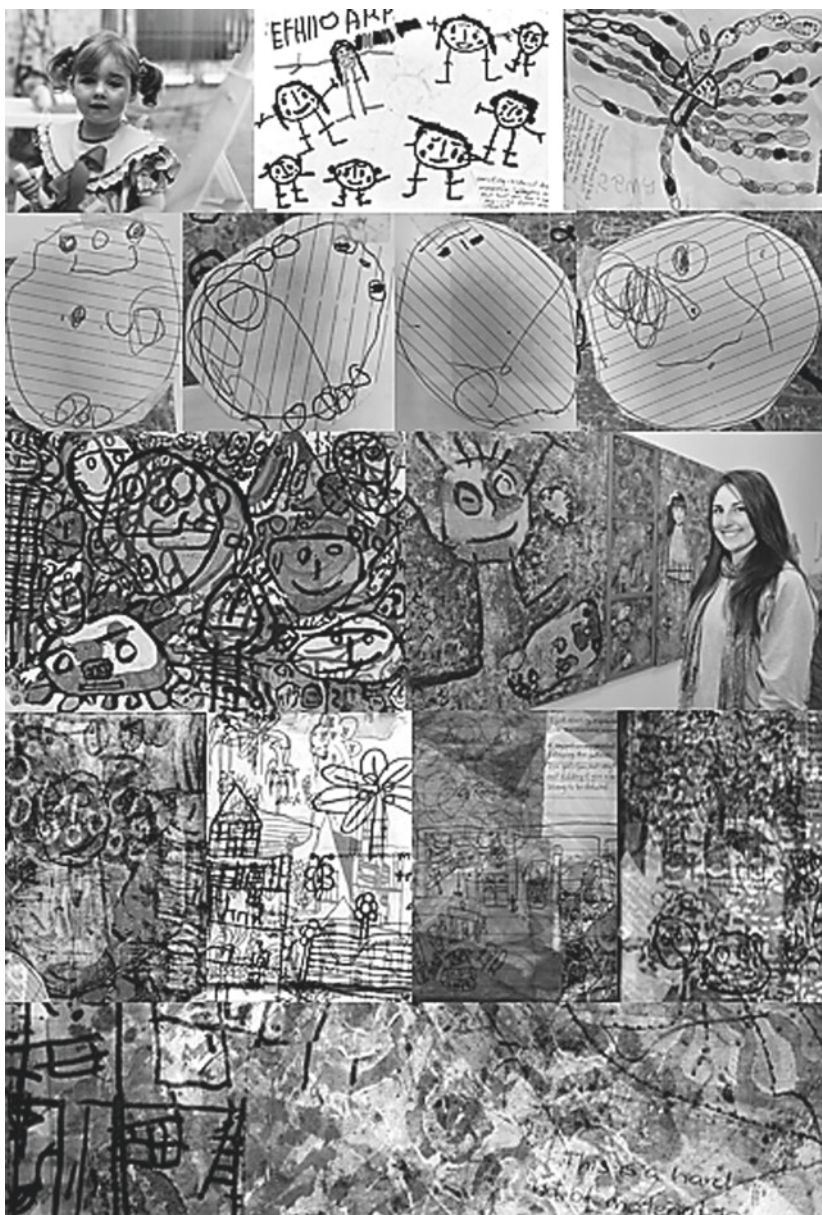
I've spent so much time moaning

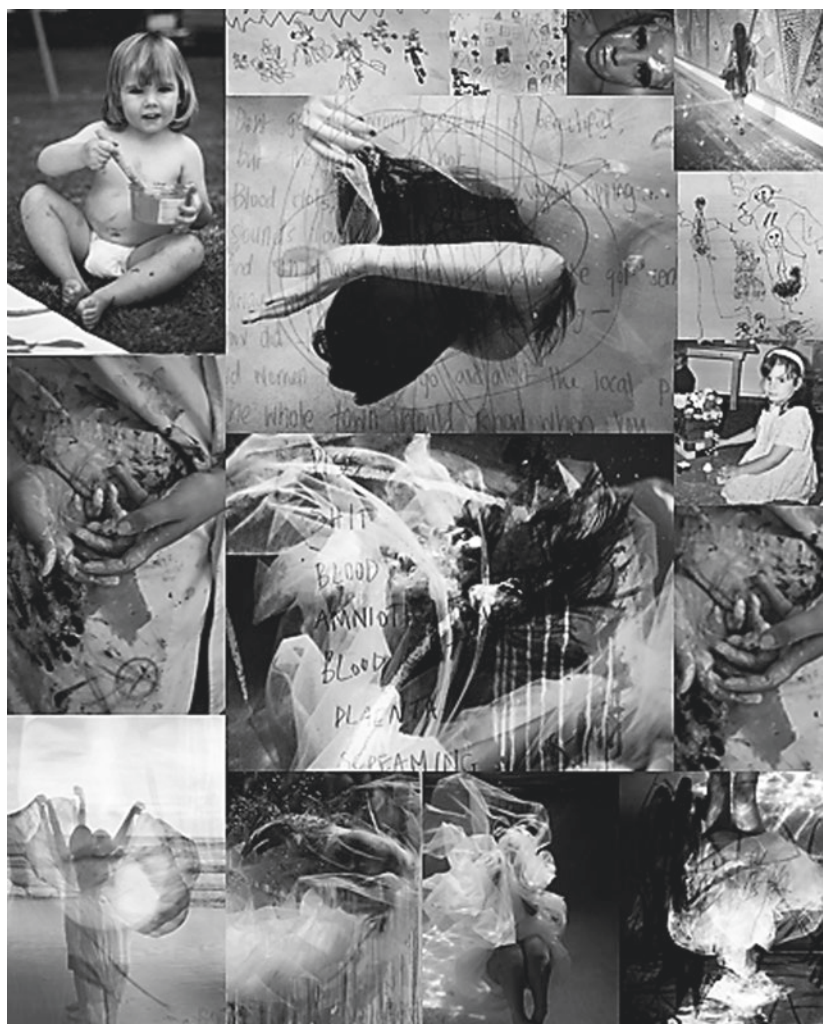
*about boys and breakups
and she is so patient
with me.*

(becoming-with)

*She always is. I
don't know what I would do without
her, she is
our fierce protector.
It is because of her that*

I am a mighty girl.





*We had
very busy childhoods, and
a very privileged upbringing, because
mama worked fulltime.*

She worked a lot.

But,

she couldn't do every thing.

*I don't remember
much about how*

mama balanced her work and her life, only that

she did.

when we lived in Sydney

I was too little

and too little

when we came to Kingscliff.

*I don't remember
those early years.*

*I do remember
the before and after school care*

*at Jillian's in Sydney, who had
a room of video games and trampolines outside and the best afternoon tea everyday.*

But,

*mama was always
the first to get to Jillian's in the afternoon,*

and it always annoyed us.

Afterschool care was the highlight of our day.

*When we were older,
we'd let ourselves in,*

often forgetting our key and

needing to uncomfortably

straddle the fence

in our school skirts and

break into the house, because

we had to pee.

Being at home for a

couple of hours in the afternoon was great –

*we could eat what
we wanted and watch what
we wanted on TV, and do whatever
we pleased.*

We felt independent.

Jillian would take us all by bus to school and pick us up in the afternoon to return us to her place (there were a lot of us, at least 15 kids). One day, a rainbow lorikeet hit the windscreen of the bus and ricocheted into the driver's side open window, landing on the floor in the aisle, dead. Jillian exclaimed, quite rattled, "I have no idea what to do with that!"

Apparently, I piped up and said, "Mum will have it, she collects dead birds and puts them in the freezer!" This seemed perfectly normal to me at the time, the daughter of an artist who used the coloured tail and wing feathers in her work (along with dried out chicken bones, bleached white in the dishwasher). The birds were in the freezer to kill the lice and also so they wouldn't rot before she could pluck them. I think Jillian was bewildered by this, and so were the other kids. Remy agreed with me though.

I don't think I missed out on anything from my mother due to her working through my childhood. Really, I think it enhanced my life. She was sometimes unavailable for things because of work, but she could get us cool Art materials to use and had her studio classroom we could visit after school and on weekends, as well as having her home studio. When I was little, she took a pre-school drawing of mine (a dinosaur) and enlarged it into this huge, mural-sized painting that included other, smaller drawings of both of ours and some of Remy's pre-writing. I have it now. I've always been interested in Art, in different ways from Remy. I have this Art connection with Mum I don't think Remy has. I see myself as an artist and a photographer; I paint and layer and design with both mediums. It is just who I am. I did try to become an artist and professional photographer full time beyond school, and did a year of a Fine Arts degree in Digital Media, but I wanted stable work, so I left that. I went straight into a Psychology degree. After that I was sort of lost, not knowing what to do next. Mum was so supportive of the gap year I had then, she seemed to understand and trusted that I would find my feet. I ended up doing a teaching program, and now I am a Special Ed/Maths teacher. Funny, because I was never interested in Maths and it is a long way from Art. I hope I can be a school counsellor and use Art therapy in my practice down the track.



*Mama has always
 supported me and
 I have yes, has modelled to me that
 the right to work,
 be paid equitably
 and can direct the terms of
 the future I create for myself.
 I am acutely aware that
 she is the mother
 others wish was their own.
 She is the
 most amazing woman
 in my life.*

Companion Species/Lily/Finley/Amy World: Companion/Mothering

*Happy Mother's Day my gorgeous friend – mother to your children and a host of wayward
 students, colleagues and forests...*

Mothering is
 often thought of as
 a woman and her
 human child.

Mothering is indeed
 a cross-species act.



For me, mothering began as a young child as I helped care for companion species on the small hobby farm where I spent much of my childhood. One of my earliest memories (aged 4) is milking Blossom, our beloved Jersey Cow. This was a kin relationship, not one of mothering. Blossom did not need me to care for her in a mothering way. She had her own calf and cared for her, and we (as a family of 8) benefited from Blossom's excess milk. It did, however, set the training wheels in motion for a mother to be.

I first mothered at the age of 8.

Silvia, my guinea pig.

I adored her.

I would visit and feed

and tend to her every day before
and after school. She lived among the birds
and other guinea pigs in

our large aviary.

I was forever trying to sneak her

into the house.

But then Silvia started having babies
and my mothering took a brutal turn.
My own mother insisted we could not
have guinea pig babies.

After that, regularly,

I would find dead

guinea pig babies

in the incinerator.

I smelt them first. It was

my earliest experience of death.

I interrogated my mum relentlessly

only to learn that
she was drowning the babies
in the laundry sink.

I was devastated.

Utterly perplexed.

Angry.

Numb. And then

for a short while

I detached myself from

Silvia until

on one ordinary day

I found Silvia lying lifeless

in the incinerator.

Silvia had died of natural causes, but as her
decaying body lay there,

I felt lost in sorrow.
 I was resolute that there was no way she was
 going to be burnt, so
 I gently held her,
 wrapped her in cloth
 and found a quiet place in the garden
 to bury,
 respect and
 say goodbye to
 Silvia.

Years later

I asked Mum why she drowned
 Silvia's babies.
 She said, "I had six children,

a house full of pets and

I just couldn't take on anything more".

She said, "What did you expect me to do?" Of course
 I talked about de-sexing

 Silvia and
 finding homes for the babies, but it would have been
 Mum doing these things
 most likely. Maybe

I expected too much or perhaps
 I should have fought harder; much

harder.

After Silvia, companion animals continued to live with and amongst us, but I found myself not wanting to get too close until George came into my life, an abandoned French Sheepdog. My mum, sisters and I had moved back to our farm in the hinterland of the Gold Coast having spent the last decade in a remote mining town in central Queensland. My parents had separated and our family was torn apart between those two places. It was a sad time until Mum announced what we needed was a dog.

So off we went to the animal shelter. Mum said it was my decision which dog would join our family. As we walked around the shelter I made a firm decision quickly that I would select a dog no one else would choose. There were probably 50 dogs. George was a strange looking dog; smokey black, lanky, shaved, wounded with a fluff-ball head. I thought, "He's it!" The shelter told us that he had been badly

beaten and abandoned. He had also been at the shelter the longest—nobody wanted him. But I wanted him. We walked him to our car and then suddenly he broke free and ran back to the shelter and back to his enclosure. He didn't trust us, but then again, why would he? I persuaded him back to the car and for the entire journey he jumped back and forth between the back seat and the front seat. From then on he slept in my bed with me. Most nights I would end up on the floor and he would have my bed to himself. Gradually over the year he ate most of my clothes and stuff. Every morning we ate breakfast together. I was happy again and I am pretty sure George was too.

But I grew up and ventured further afield. I took my first real solo trip to Alice Springs at the age of 15. I was selected for a national exchange program. For three months my project in Alice Springs¹ was to investigate the production of beef in Australia. Specifically my research question was, 'Is beef environmentally safe?' I visited abattoirs and witnessed the massacre of cows and chickens. I can still smell the blood. I made a decision there and then to never eat animals again. That was 26 years ago. At the time I thought this experience led me to vegetarianism, but it did so much more. It led me to becoming an environmentalist through my teaching, research and mothering.

I ventured back home to George and to my surprise my Dad as well. Mum and Dad were coming back together. I wasn't so sure about it. I quite liked the sanctuary of my Mum, my sisters and George. But George loved my Dad. They even looked like each other. George would follow Dad all over the farm as he worked in our vineyard and tended to the growing menagerie of animals. I thought George didn't need me anymore, but in hindsight and much later having suffered a divorce myself, maybe Dad needed some care.

Over the years, George always played that caring mothering/fathering role whenever any of us were troubled. My Dad still says he's never known a dog like George and although George came to love others, he was home for me. As I drifted off to university and adventured across the world, he would always be there upon my return. But George got

¹In the Northern Territory—some 3000 kilometres from my home in Queensland at the time.

old and when I moved to Melbourne to take up an academic position he passed away in my Dad's arms. His picture still stands tall on the mantle in my parents' home. George in the end had mothered me far more than I ever mothered him.



I poured my heart and soul into academia and became an avid wildlife rescuer and carer with WIRES.² I had rescued, cared for and released hundreds of wild animals—from possums, kangaroos, sugar gliders, wattle birds and magpies to blue tongue lizards. The houses I rented became wildlife sanctuaries. I regularly held classes at my house where I contended that environmental education begins in the home; that the home is a 'site of ecological learning'.

The time came though that I decided I'd like to have a baby, a human baby. I thought it was as simple as that. It wasn't. I went through two

²*Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service Inc.* It is Australia's largest wildlife rescue organisation.

years of fertility treatment. Up until that point, it was the saddest time of my life. I was up, and then down. My body was entirely failing me. I had naively thought it was my right to be able to have a baby. The day came though, and I was pregnant. After so much trying, invasive treatments and tears, I was finally there. Until I wasn't. I was still in the first trimester when it happened.

	I woke in incredible pain. I was rushed to hospital,
sirens blazing, slipping in	and out
	of consciousness.
	I was losing my baby. She was
ectopic, out of place.	
	I always felt she was a girl.
As they scurried me into surgery, I vividly remember saying	to my doctor, "Save my baby".
	She said,
	"I need to save you".
	I lost so much blood – litres of it. I woke to find myself
in the maternity ward of a hospital. A lady came in	
	and said,
	"I've come to take a photo of your baby".
	I didn't say anything. I didn't need to. My
mother, father and sister hurried to my side.	
	I collapsed
into their arms and told them	

I didn't think
 I'd ever recover from this.
 I was broken.
 I wanted to know where my baby was.
 I kept imagining her

in some medical incinerator.
 Flowers, plants and gifts of bereavement came in, but
 nothing helped until

I picked up a paintbrush.
 I painted the entire house - twice;
 gardened and

mothered the zoo of wildlife
 I was living with.

I started fertility treatment once more, and just several months later,
 I was pregnant again. The months trickled on and then there was Lily.



We named her after the lily pads, which always covered our dam at the farm. For me, this was when human mothering and academia took full force.

Where Ever I Went, Lily Went

I gave keynotes with Lily attached to me or while pushing her in the pram. At one conference I was asked to leave because Lily wasn't registered as a conference delegate. I refused and insisted I was presenting.

She was 8 months old and I was still breastfeeding. It was disgraceful. My academic colleagues were outraged and quickly surrounded me. It was a moment of academic comradery.



and cetaceans,
 used for propelling,
 steering, and
 balancing.

My life was turbulent
 in a new relationship, with
 a toddler, now
 a newborn baby and in the early stages of
 an associate professorship.

I needed propelling,
 steering and
 balance.

That was six years ago.

During the last ten years of mothering, the juggle with academia at times has felt impossible. I am consistently late for work with delayed school runs and an almost constant merry-go-round of illness. And all the while I regularly feel I'm not doing well, at much, at all. It's easy to fool yourself into thinking you are doing well in academia, by the list of grants, papers and Ph.D. completions, but is it really changing anything? Specifically, changing human's toxic relations with nature? This was my impetus into an academic life.



Give me more hugs Lily said, when

*I asked her what
I could do better.*

Don't work as much.

Play with us more please

Take us to the park more.

I like how you love us.

*I like that you are KIND
and CAIRING to us.*

I love that you love plants.

Blaa blaaa blaa.

I love your hugs, Finley said.

I like when you give me treats.

When you take Winky

to the beach.

You must make lots of money, your building is big.

I didn't know that you

make my bed every day until today, but

I like it.

I like when you take me on bushwalks.

I love that we live in a spider hotel.



As my kids now constantly harass me for more ‘tech-time’ because the time-out limit has gone off again, I find myself saying, “Get outside” a lot. And then quickly thinking, “I’m supposed to be an environmental educator”.

But,

then I see our cats
 (whom we inherited from my sister who passed away, just five short years ago)
 with my children
 snuggled up
 in their beds every night. And
 my daughter’s elaborate plan for
 guinea pigs
 on her 11th birthday, insisting that one
 be called ‘Silvia’. And
 my son’s insistence that he’d like
 a blue tongue lizard
 to live with us.
 They’re now mothering. And
 perhaps mothering is the
 most organic form of
 environmental education
 there is.

Sometimes it is hard to hear the positive messages that my children say to me about my mothering. It hits harder and stings hard when they say, “Don’t work so much”.

I do work too much, and I am constantly in a work-mother-life juggling act.

Would it be different if I wasn't an academic and did some other job? Perhaps. I've had Deans and colleagues advise me to work less. I need to do better or perhaps surrender to being a member of the 'bad mother's club'.

I am a young professor.
I became a professor at 37,
four years ago.

It's not a trick and
it isn't luck that I moved
through the ranks quickly.
I've worked hard.
Sacrificed a lot.
I mean a lot. So much.
Too much.

But,

how do you do academia differently? Or again,
how do
I surrender?

My colleagues tend to be older
and more often than not
are mothering whisperers for me
and perhaps me for them
from time to time.

I appreciate that age
and wisdom are not synonymous,
but there is
something to be said for time
and mothering.

Endings and Beginnings

As mothering assemblages, we birth and rebirth ourselves and those we mother, continuously, as a dynamic process of becoming. In so many ways, second-wave feminism failed motherhood: it did not deliver what was promised and still hasn't despite the claims of post-feminism. Women continue to carry the family burden of domestic work, emotional labour and care (Maushart, 2010). Although rooted in an ethics of care, matricentric feminism remains under-theorised, the maternal body a continued site for discomfort, anxiety and exhaustion, which contributes to its otherness (Huopainen & Satama, 2019). The themes that emerge in the above autoethnographies thus reflect the literature, including the demands and challenges of time-space, elements of becoming, notions of what it is to be a 'good mother' (Donath, 2015) and whether what we are doing is 'right'.

What this chapter extends, however, is the notion of mothering as posthuman, as empathic, as artful, as troubled and as connective tissue: mothering assemblages as a site for hope, beyond the crushing work of it and its searing joy. These themes will endure within these assemblages, beyond our writings and the childhoods of our children into the world and their own parenting experiences, and into the lives of our readers. These aspects remain a constant, even as our mothering is in constant flux. We (Lexi and Amy) have found that the best we can do is just to do the best we can, trusting in our instincts and in the agency of our children. In this paper, we have foregrounded these instincts and this agency as a cacophony of voices, a choral gathering—an assemblage of becoming-maternal as becoming-with.



Note

1. Artwork attributions are as follows:
Artworks 1–3; 7; 8; 16 Bronte Cutcher
Artworks 5–6 Remy Cutcher
Artwork 4 Alexandra Lasczik
Artworks 9–15 Amy-Cutter-Mackenzie-Knowles & Alexandra Lasczik

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(Re)Birthing the Academy: Unruly Daughters Striving for Feminist Futures

Catherine Manathunga, Barbara Grant, Frances Kelly,
Arwen Raddon and Jisun Jung

Beginnings

The intransigent exclusion of mothering (and fathering) from academic life has been canvassed by researchers since the 1970s at least (e.g. Amsler & Motta, 2019; Armenti, 2004; Raddon, 2002). In what follows, we join this international field of scholars who strive for feminist futures in the academy by documenting and meditating on our

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embodied and unruly experiences across time and space as academics who are also mothers and grandmothers. In so doing, as others have done before us, we seek to give birth to a new kind of academy that will support—rather than penalise—academic women (and men) in their commitments and responsibilities for the care of others.

In our discussions and thinking, we have been inspired by three feminist theorists whose work explores the institutions of academia and motherhood. Isabelle Stengers, Vinciane Despret, and Collective (2014) point out how the inclusion of women (and other ‘newcomers’) has never really challenged business-as-usual in the university:

[T]he university merely put up with the arrival of ‘newcomers’, for whom university knowledge is not their just due, but rather an adventure to an unknown land – first: the arrival of girls, next: youth from ‘less privileged’ classes, and then: immigrants. ... You are welcome and your presence is normal, for we are ‘democrats’, but on our terms, so that nothing changes. You are welcome as long as you do not make a fuss.... (2014, p. 17)

Decades earlier, feminist scholar Adrienne Rich systematically critiqued the institution of motherhood and advocated for its radical reworking. She recommended we begin at last to ‘*think through the body*, to connect what has been so cruelly disorganised – our great mental capacities, hardly used; our highly developed tactile sense; our genius for close observation; our complicated, pain-enduring, multi-pleasured physicality’ (1976, p. 284, italics in original). Some of what she argued for has emerged in new forms of research pioneered by feminist scholars, but the disjuncture between mothering work and academic work remains, such that there have even been debates over how many published papers a baby is worth

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(so that the productivity of an academic woman-with-baby/ies can be calculated ‘accurately’ in the neo-capitalism of research audit—see Amsler & Motta, 2019). So relevantly for the academy, Rich sees mothering on a par with how we understand intellectual work, arguing it must be seen as occupying ‘the same realm of decision, struggle, surprise, imagination, and conscious intelligence, as any other difficult, but freely chosen, work’ (p. 280).

Our response to these theorists is to write personal vignettes about working within universities in Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ), Australia, England and Hong Kong: in these small stories that ‘think through the body’, we make a fuss about the difficult work of being both academic and mother in order to breach the walls in institutional (and our own?) thought that keep academic and mothering work apart, and minds and bodies in a zero-sum game.

We begin our chapter by sketching a brief history of women’s participation in universities with reference to our respective countries and describing our writing methodology. We then offer five vignettes followed by a closing discussion inspired by our reading of Stengers et al. (2014) and Rich (1976).

Birthing Academia and Motherhood: Absenting Women

At their birth, the western university traditions (within which we work) had little to do with women. Indeed, a medieval European description of an ideal lecture hall claims: ‘it should be set off so that women cannot visit it continually’ (Clark, 2006, p. 69). For a long time, university education for women was thought to be not only dangerous for men (Parkes, 2010) but also likely to damage women’s fertility and/or marriageability (Theobald, 1996). Nevertheless, women battered at the academy’s doors: there are scattered records of singular women obtaining degrees and/or teaching at universities in Europe from the thirteenth century onwards.

Since their rebirth under the secularism of the European Enlightenment, universities have been the sites of a strict delineation between public (historically masculine) and private (historically feminine) spheres, by and large eschewing the monastic-style communal life of the Oxbridge collegiate system. The academic self-generated by the twin forces of bureaucratic government and capitalism (particularly in the German model, influential for modern universities worldwide) was expected to be a ‘public self ... supposed to inhabit the office, striving for objectivity, impartiality, impersonality and the public good and distancing itself from private interests [and] ... the private self that ... inhabits the home’ (Clark, 2006, p. 14). Subsequently, during a period of great expansion, modern universities were designed to enact a strict binary between public/professional and private/personal spheres, with severe implications for women’s participation. Echoes of these binaries remain in contemporary university workplaces and may be especially marked in some academic disciplines or in some cultures (such as Confucian heritage cultures—see Leung, 2003).

Across our four sites, the most noticeable difference in the birth of university places for women is how early on women were admitted and thus how much tradition they had to unseat in their arrival. In England, the first universities were established in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Oxford and Cambridge respectively) but the first women students were not accepted until well into the second half of the nineteenth century. Initially, women were only given a limited form of participation: attending separate, single-sex classes and colleges and, until 1878 at London University, not allowed to graduate. Some universities resisted women’s full participation for a long time: Oxford, for example, was the second-to-last British university to allow women to sit for degrees—delaying until October 1920 (Oxford University Archives, 2018). In contrast, in the colonial Antipodes, the first universities opened their doors in the late decades of the nineteenth century and admitted women as full participants almost, if not, immediately: in NZ, in 1871 to the first university, the University of Otago, in its opening year; in Australia, in 1880 to all three extant universities. As Theobald argues, ‘colonial universities were state-funded and therefore vulnerable to the demands of classical liberalism for equity and fair play; [they were also] secular

.... and unencumbered by the traditions of centuries' (1996, p. 56). Several decades later, in 1921, just ten years after its establishment, the University of Hong Kong (HKU) admitted its first two female students. Soon after, the presence of 12 women students at HKU led one writer for the *Union Magazine* to colourfully claim that 'ornaments are only precious when they are rare' (Cunich, 2012, p. 287).

During this period of women's arrival into academia, university structures and practices remained strongly marked with 'signposts and contours ... alien to women' (Theobald, 1996, p. 71). Women students tended to remain in the fringes of universities, sitting together in the front rows of lecture theatres and retreating to separate women's clubs, common rooms and colleges (Theobald, 1996). They grappled with the 'double burden' of proving they were the intellectual equals of men while simultaneously retaining the outward appearance of being 'true women' who had to justify their public movements (Theobald, 1996). They often wore demure clothing and adopted a modest demeanour in order to protect their reputation (Hughes & Ahern, 1993; Theobald, 1996). In that period, only a relatively small number of indigenous Māori, and then Pacific Islands, women attended NZ universities (Hughes & Ahern, 1993). The first recorded Australian Aboriginal person to graduate was a woman (Dr. Margaret William-Weir) in 1959. The number of women academics in each of our countries also remained small for a long time.

Yet women *did* engage in academic work: while most were relegated to the fringes of academic life, a few graduates secured work as demonstrators and assistant lecturers (Pietsch, 2013). Some improved their chances of gaining academic work by marrying male academics (Pietsch, 2013) although, even then, they rarely gained full credit for any research they conducted. Women operated as part of the 'shadow network' of universities (Pietsch, 2013, p. 81), in which they:

transcribed articles, ordered research and conducted experiments for their husbands, brothers and fathers in ways that went largely unacknowledged. They maintained and facilitated male sociability, conducting personal and professional correspondences and organising afternoon teas, dinner parties and excursions to the country that fostered connections between academic men. (Pietsch, 2013, p. 81)

The unpaid work of women in support of academic men has recently been acknowledged in the twitter feed #ThanksForTyping.

From the 1970s on, with the second wave of feminism—and its ‘girls can do anything’ message—the numbers of women students and academics surged. For some at least, attending university in the 1970s was ‘a conscious act of sexual politics’ (Theobald, 1996, p. 90). Now, in the early twenty-first century, women are clearly present in the hallowed halls. Female university students outnumber males in each of our countries, although they remain under-represented in some disciplines. In contrast, women make up only 40–45% of academic staff in Australia and NZ, 35% in the UK and 30% in Hong Kong, according to the Global Index (based on 2010 data) published by *Times Higher Education* (Grove, 2013). Moreover, the disparity between women and men remains striking at senior levels globally with women only 28% of professors in Humanities, 19% in the Social Sciences, and 8% in Engineering and Technology (Grove, 2013). In Australia, fewer than 20% of universities are led by women compared with 14% in the UK (only one in the Russell Group) and 12.5% (one out of eight) in NZ. In Hong Kong, there has never been a female vice-chancellor and there is a very limited number of female leaders, including pro-vice chancellors and deans. Luke (1998) suggests this absence is due to a combination of 150 years of British colonial rule and a Confucian worldview that sees women primarily as mothers and wives: in this context, women academics have to struggle between the post-feminist choices offered through their western-style education and traditional gender values. Significantly, in each of our countries, some groups of women—including indigenous, working-class, and Chinese in expatriate- and Confucian-dominated HK—have struggled to participate as much as women from majority groups.

The academic institutions within which we work—and where we are now present in great numbers—were conceived without women. So too, the institution of ‘motherhood’ has been ‘a whole which is not of our creation’ (Rich, 1976, p. 276). Writing 40 years ago, Rich argued that prescriptions about motherhood and the ideal mother have been constructed by men in order to control women, removing women’s decision-making capabilities and freeing men from day-to-day

responsibilities of childcare. This has created ‘the dangerous schism between “private” and “public” life’ (1976, p. 13) responsible for ‘the invisible violence ... of motherhood, the guilt, the powerless responsibility for human lives, the judgements and condemnations, the fear of her own power’ (1976, p. 277). Living and working as academic women in bureaucratic institutions is a struggle, as the following vignettes illustrate: on the one hand, we are powerful as teachers, researchers and writers; on the other, we remain ensnared in enduring myths of motherhood as women’s work and best kept private.

Collaborative Writing

We, the authors, are an intergenerational collective of academic women with different heritages—English, Irish Australian, Korean, and Pākehā (white NZ)—and academic work-histories of between four and 35 years. Some of us have collaborated for decades; others have met quite recently through shared research interests. We all teach and research in higher education, but bring different disciplinary trainings and theoretical perspectives to bear. To write this chapter, we gathered several times via online video conferencing where, together, we explored how we might generate evocative vignettes of being academic mothers and grandmothers in order to imagine a different future university. We developed a broad set of parameters to generate the first draft of our vignettes taking to heart Rich’s (1976) call to ‘think through our bodies’ and considering whether to write from our own or our children’s imagined perspectives. We shared key theoretical readings and wrote the historical overview in order to set our vignettes into the context of women’s experiences of universities across our four countries and our different career time-periods. From the second meeting on, we read our draft vignettes aloud to each other, hearing our own and our children’s distinctive voices, finding connections and resonances. These are emotional stories: laughter and tears laced their [re]telling. Over the ether, we listened compassionately to each other, demonstrating and deepening our relationality. Because of the sensitivity of our stories, we agreed to ‘hold’ the vignettes rather than engage in a great deal of critical

analysis of our roles, investments and positions in them. We were aware of the resonances and differences among our stories but opted to retain their heterogeneity rather than seeking to critique or alter them. For example, two of our vignettes put forth our children's voices and their views on mothers' lives. One of the authors drew together discussions she'd had with her daughter with her own reflections and memories, to create an impression, or feel, of how they had lived through painful times and come out the other side. Another author applied imaginative writing based on her interpretation about how her child might feel. Although her daughter is too young to express herself with refined language, the author imagined the child's view in their daily life. It was the process of 'taking creative risks' (Mitchell & Clark, 2018, p. 2) for the engaging qualitative research. We discussed overall themes that emerged from our historical background, theoretical readings and vignettes and sought to shorten and sharpen our vignettes. We invite readers to think through the resonances and diversity between our stories. We offer them to you here, followed by a discussion of how they connect with the lines of thought stimulated by the words of Rich (1976) and Stengers et al. (2014).

Unruly Vignettes

Leaving the Building: Mothering Across an Academic Life (Barbara)

It's 1988, late at the end of a long day of seeing anxious students who don't 'get' how to do academic work. I rush out of my tiny office in the converted locker-room and stand, heart pounding, on the library forecourt. My brain registers the shock: where the hell is my small daughter? I (or her father) have left her somewhere and I know I have to pick her up. But where? I feel like the woman on that Lichtenstein-styled T-shirt who says, 'Oh my god! I left the baby on the bus!' I don't remember what happened, how I figured out where she was (there were no cell phones in those days), but all ended well. She was

possibly in the university creche—although creche hours were limited so she may have been with my mother. I do remember the existential shock that I could *forget* where my precious child was and how it left me shaky for a long time. A frighteningly bad mother.

It's 2016, mid-afternoon on a day that reliably starts with the strenuous peace of early morning yoga. Every Wednesday, I leave the slightly derelict building where I now work at 2.30 to pick up my 5-year-old grandboy from school and his 2-year-old brother from day care. I hope the traffic will be flowing—the congested roads in Auckland are notorious, all it takes is one small accident. As I drive across the harbour bridge, my heart lifts at the thought of the hours ahead. What will we do together, eat for dinner? How will I entice the reluctant reader to give it yet another (painful) go? I love my time with them, their small cuddlesome bodies, their funny explorations of language, their joy in life, their capacity to learn new things. Unlike my time as a mother-student-academic, I don't try and do any work around them, neither housework nor academic work. Only later, after I've delivered them home, do I return to my computer for several hours. A glad grandmother.

It's 2018, Mondays and Thursdays. I jolt out of working intensely to the realisation that it's 4 o'clock (already!). I must leave my train of thought, my quiet desk at home, to visit my 94-year-old mother. Ten minutes later I'm there, a little anxious about what I'll find and feeling late for something I can't quite grasp, although I suspect it's that long-hoped-for relationship of mutual interest that will now never happen. My mother looks up as if I've just come back into the room from another part of the house. She's pleased to see me. When she lets me, I push her wheelchair around the neighbourhood and we admire small colourful things—flowers, butterflies and children. More often, we sit companionably in various spots around her rest home—her favourite arrangement is side-by-side on her soft-sea-green-wool-covered bed, but it makes my back ache terribly and the warmth of the breeze-less bedroom sends me to sleep. Sometimes we lie, spooning, on her bed and snooze together. We don't talk much, she has trouble finding words. I love her sweetness but I buck at her ageing. An unsettled daughter.

Mothering, grandmothering, mother-mothering. My more recently acquired routines call me from the building, out of academic work, just as mothering did over the first two decades of my academic life. There have always been those untimely leavings, the jarring jolt of return to a different tempo, the feeling of being out of joint, not a real academic. But nowadays my mothering routines impact more lightly, because I am *not* The Mother and I care less for my university than before—in some deep way, I have ‘left’ the ‘building’. More now, I’m able to relish the loving embodied connections that have always dragged me from the delirium of academic work and foiled the enticements of academic success.

Playing in Sandstone Cloisters: Academic Motherhood and [Re]Humanising the Academy (Catherine)

Memories flood back of my boys, Rory and Daniel, growing up on campus. They were thesis babies, so being an academic and mother is entirely entangled for me, and for them. Before they were born, I carried them in my womb around the campus as an Honours student and, later, a Ph.D. student. Australian universities were not family-friendly places in the 1980s/90s. Rory was part of the student union campaign to get campus baby-changing facilities. There were no spaces in the campus creche, so my long-suffering Mum would take hungry baby Daniel for walks as I tutored; I would race after class to my shared post-graduate student office to feed him. Breast pumps were not used much back then. Male postgraduates thought it was funny to comment, ‘the students are getting younger and younger around here’, as I walked past holding my toddler’s hand and perching my baby on my hip, work back-pack weighing my shoulders down.

The boys’ squirmy, chubby, sweaty bodies made the hard, cold, competitive sandstone environment of campus human for me. As their little legs grew, they raced around elegant archways and between library stacks and played footy on the green grass. Their joyous screams echoed off creamy walls. They sat quietly under tables playing with toys during fiery History Student Association meetings as we plotted to change the

world. They walked beside me as we marched in protest for Aboriginal and Torres Strait land rights and free higher education. They played in my musty office in the old demountable building as the floor and desk silted up with papers, books and pens. When they got bored, they would leave little post-it notes around the room for me to find. I have them still, yellowing proudly on my shelves: 'bless this mess'; a drawing of a bulky 1990s computer with the lines 'Hello Mummy! Have a nice day. What are you doing? Can't wait to see you? What's for dinner? From Daniel'.

The juggle was exhausting but their company on campus was precious. They slowed me down so I noticed the jacarandas showering their purple blooms, calling the students to study for their end-of-semester exams as the weather grew hot with the promise of holidays; the bush-turkeys scratching up mulch in a ceaseless search for juicy worms. They marked the passage of time with their growing bodies, growling stomachs and boisterous play. They kept my feet in the earth, while widening my mind with their vivid imaginations. Their love and company soothed the bitter politics of the academy and the circling forces of managerialism. Much later, when they were university students themselves, they would sometimes walk with me into my office building. It felt so safe to be walking between my two towering sons.

Now, I'm a grandmother to little Zinnia Catherine. She's only a baby but I wonder if I'll get the chance to bring her on campus. I have so much to share with her. Will her Mummy and Daddy want me to do this? Will she be interested? It's too early to say yet but I'm hoping to be that kind of *Móraí* (Grandma).

As I sit in my work office, the piles of paper, books and pens still multiplying around me, time warps and folds in on itself. I swing my eyes from the computer screen around my desk and walls. They are there, Rory and Daniel, in photos from when they were smiling, primary school children, to when they left school, to when they graduated. These photos jostle with newer images of little Zinnia, my baby's baby, flesh of my flesh of my flesh. I pause in the hush of a warm Friday afternoon and I hear echoes of their excited laughter, their tears when they fought over toys, their sighs when I said, 'just one more hour'.

Making a Living (on) Campus (Frances)

I walk down the corridor towards the group clustered half way. There are three women, a baby, a dog. My heart lifts.

My son hardly comes to campus now, but when younger he would catch the bus here after school, buy himself a muffin, go to the library or hang out in the corridor, often with the son or nephew of a colleague, until I finished for the day and we could walk home. Sometimes he would lie on the couch outside my office, reading, his grubby limbs stretched unselfconsciously, a shoe dangling off an aromatic foot.

This morning I walked through the campus and saw the black campus cat stretched across the warmth of a picnic table. A student, entranced, stroked along her back like a willing slave.

Every day there are animals and children in my workplace, a faculty of education and social work in a New Zealand university. There are also precious trees, winding paths, a marae, library, swimming pool, orchard, twinkling constellations of lights at Matariki, beehives, dance and drama studios, tennis courts—and lecture theatres, offices and seminar rooms.

It is a living campus.

Currently, there is a sign in my corridor: *The xxx campus has always been rundown and underfunded, and [the students] don't deserve that. Does the university not value the people that will grow to raise its tamariki [children]?*

It is produced by a social justice group, with the aim to draw attention to the need for the faculty to have greater institutional financial support. The signs started appearing soon after a review in which 29 academic positions in the faculty were disestablished, and after the university confirmed it will be selling the site on which the campus, a former teacher's college, has stood for over one hundred years.

I agree with the signs.

I hate the signs. I like the history of this place; I don't mind that it is a little *worn*. It is not new, it has no vaunting chrome and glass buildings circa 2001; however, it is a place where a child might come after a day at school, lie down, drop a few crumbs and slip off his shoes while academic work goes on around him.

I do take the activist group's point. When there was a fire in the student commons six years ago, the building was demolished rather than rebuilt, the corners of its ruins smoothed back to form an industrial agora. Last year two giant eucalypts were felled (a health and safety risk) and their pale, gradually disappearing trunks have provided an apt yet horrifying backdrop to our year of culling.

It is a dying campus.

Yet the cat prowls in the ruins—it is her favourite place—and children ride trikes around the stumps of trees.

All day I have marked exams against the persistent call of a bird.

The exam essays were about governesses—and dutifully discussed the middle-class 'separate spheres' ideology. Governesses, I said in the lecture, reinforced (through the curriculum) *and* undermined (through their existence) this ideology. Governesses were indicators of new-found economic status for their employers, paid to imbue the daughters of the house with middle-class habitus, and they were sources of anxiety, cuckoos in the nest, an anathema to the middle-class sensibility they taught by being women who worked for a living.

The separation of the world of work and intellectual pursuit from the world of mothers, children and 'care' is deeply engrained in universities too and reflects an age-old separation of mind and body that requires constant effort to refute. Yet this campus works against this split, and so my university is not just a place of the mind (nor of gold-star researchers and rankings), but a place where children play, where there are birds, cats, dogs and trees surrounding and sustaining us while we work.

Rebirthing by Stepping Outside Academia (Arwen)

Leaving academia was my rebirth. A divorce: it was incredibly painful to break with a massive part of my life into which I'd invested so much time, energy and heart. However, leaving became the only path that made sense to me anymore. The result was sadness but also an incredible sense of freedom. Freedom to say something unspeakable: 'my daughter and I matter; my body and health matters'.

My last full-time academic role was a well-paid management role at a tertiary education institution overseas. I could support myself as a now-divorced Mum with shared parenting responsibilities. However, I worked in a windowless office most of the day and I spent two hours daily commuting across the city. Coming on the back of a few years of insecure but flexible home-based research work, the feeling of being boxed in was palpable! I'd found myself back in a job where I barely saw my daughter and, simultaneously, I contracted mycoplasma and hypothyroidism. While grateful for the opportunities provided, it was exhausting and I truly wondered where the joy in life had gone. My daughter still recalls those two years (aged 6–8) and the pain we both experienced:

Mummy was working at home, which I liked, but then she changed jobs. Daddy had a helper, so I lived with him most of the week. Mummy and I had a few hours together after she got back from work at 7 pm or later, a couple of times a week. If I didn't go to bed late, I wouldn't see much of Mummy. ... She couldn't meet me off the school bus at all and missed some school events. She was always really tired and was sick all the time, though she still went to work. ... I was sad and Mummy didn't smile or laugh for ages.

Leaving my job actually took some years from the initial spark of motherhood in 2009, then living through the very issues I'd researched years before (Raddon, 2002) and, finally, going through what I later realised were two burnouts. Also, I'd been practising yoga more seriously: a stark contrast to my heavily intellectual, mind-focused academic persona. Yoga was connecting me to my physical body and breath, breaking through my rational, atheist self. In this *mêlée* of pleasurable and painful experiences, I found myself with a deep sense of my soul. No surprise that yoga was key to my rebirth.

Attending a management-training course on Covey's (2004) 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, we were asked to present an object representing our life's purpose. Holding up a yoga strap, I explained that mine was to support others achieve their best, by helping them see that it was all inside already, but they might just need a gentle prop.

That day, I decided to train as a yoga teacher. An enormous weight lifted off my body, despite it seeming a near crazy idea! Announcing the change to my daughter was a joyful moment. It wasn't easy, but I felt unable to be the mother I wanted to be, or take care of my health and well-being, while engaging fully with both 'greedy institutions' of academia and mothering (Edwards, 2000). In time, I was reborn a 'partial academic'. I now teach yoga and provide healing therapies in the English countryside, and I'm an external, part-time academic supporting online students.

We live in the countryside instead of the city. Mummy takes me to and collects me from school, which I like. Mummy still has to do her marking and working with students online. She can be really busy with that and I don't like those times. I like Mummy working at home though, as we get to spend time together. She teaches yoga and sometimes I go with her. Her thyroid is a lot better too. She gets tired sometimes, but not like before.

Recognising or Denying the Presence of My Children in Workplace: The Life of a Junior Academic Mother (Jisun)

My daughter's story: One fine spring morning, I first visited my mother's campus. I was still a 7-month-old foetus. My mother, with me on board, was sitting, waiting to be interviewed for a tenure-track job, which seemed very important to her. Although it was obvious that she was pregnant, no one asked about me, but she ended the interview by saying that my birth and care would not affect her work. Did they believe my mother? I think they did because she got a job offer a couple of days later.

Sorry, but my mother was wrong! My arrival completely changed her life. She struggled with sleep deprivation and breastfeeding but, most of all, with the new duties awaiting her after maternity leave. After ten short weeks, my mother began her new job and I spent most of my time with my babysitter.

I am now three years old and have one little brother. Every evening, my mother brings home frozen milk she has pumped during the day for my brother. She told my father she is grateful for her own office because it is not easy to find places where she can pump milk on campus. My parents were excited by the news that the university was going to establish a day care and kindergarten, but those places have never materialised. That was a shame because we had been hoping we could spend more time with our mother on campus.

My brother and I often visit my mother at work. Beneath Hong Kong's skyscrapers, we like to see the trees, birds, fishes and turtles on her campus. I like to ride my bicycle or play with her computer, telephone, books or chair. But these days, she takes us only on the weekends. She often tells us that her campus is her workplace, not our playground. Why not?

My own story: In my culture, there is an assumption that the workplace should be disconnected from the family. According to this view, you should compartmentalise your life. As an academic and as a mother, you should maintain the same priorities as your childless peers. I always wanted to keep doing things the way I did before I became a mother. During my maternity leave, I was constantly replying to emails from students and colleagues. Can we really achieve an academic culture of caring when we deny the presence of our families? Is it a matter of changing policies or people's mindsets, or both?

I often experience internal conflicts when navigating the boundaries between being a professional and being a mother (although I acknowledge they are not mutually exclusive). I know my colleagues would welcome my kids if I brought them to campus, but I hesitate because I do not want anyone to be disturbed by children laughing and talking in the corridor. And I am still not sure whether major conferences and their participants would welcome my kids. My university has a policy of allowing parents to defer their tenure applications for one year, but I hesitate because I want to prove that I can 'make it' without any affirmative action. Yet, if all mothers were to interpret being professional as a separation of work and family, family-friendly policies would never be institutionalised. As parent, we need to take more actions to integrate our children's presence in the workplace so that the co-existence of family and work will be accepted as normal by the time my daughter is a working mother in 30 years.

Feminist Futures Among the Ruins?

[Women have] obtained the “right” to think from 9 to 6, like men – even if it means, according to the quasi norm of the double shift, taking care of their children and their pots afterwards, but they lack gratitude toward those who have admitted them to their ranks. They do not let themselves, not completely, be assigned to the role to which they have acceded. (Stengers et al., 2014, pp. 152–153)

What kind of feminist futures for the academy are immanent in our stories for universities among the ruins (Readings, 1996)? We think of ourselves as the unruly daughters of Virginia Woolf, echoing Stengers et al.’s (2014) evocative subtitle, ‘the unfaithful daughters of Virginia Woolf’. For one thing, it is clear the contemporary academy does sometimes offer spaces for being both embodied mother and academic. Much has changed since the beginning of the university, which we sketched at the start of this chapter. It now offers us on-site creches, although not always, and often with only limited access. It offers ‘family-friendly policies’, yoga classes, the freedom to work from home, flexible hours. It provides beautiful green places or open built spaces where children can play—or ‘couches in quiet corridors’ where they can rest and read. Indeed, since the 1970s, and largely in response to feminist insistence, much has been achieved in our universities. Despite the university’s attempt to enact a business-as-usual approach to the gradual inclusion of women and members of intersectional groups, women have indeed made a ‘fuss’ and campaigned long, loudly and hard for change (Stengers et al., 2014). But we forswear being grateful: none of these things is enough and, moreover, none can be taken for granted. We always need to vigilantly protect what we have as a basis for building better futures.

And build we must. Our vignettes bristle with exhausting tensions and enduring sorrows: the ‘existential shock’ of emerging from the intensities of academic work to the quotidian task of picking up the child, visiting the elderly mother, grappling with being a sleep-deprived new mother. The inhospitality of no place to pump breast milk, of too much work to address issues of serious illness. There are griefs over children out-of-mind, giant trees felled, a homely campus to be sold, an idealised

academic life (a life of the mind?) daily rudely disrupted, colleagues being culled, of needing to leave the academy in order to have a life worth living. More than ever, in its pressures for unrelenting performativity, the academy does not recognise the wider lives of its workers, women or men. Yet, academic life surely does not have to be like this.

Our vignettes show vividly how sensual bodies are implicated all the way in our academic and mothering work. We remember ‘cuddlesome bodies’, ‘joyous screams’, an ‘aromatic foot’, ‘spooning’ an elderly mother when talk fails. While we recount our joys in the living things that share our campuses, we also tell of terrors at our mortal bodies and those of others we love: exhaustion, fright, pain and weight. We notice our surroundings and how our children occupy them. As Rich (1976, p. 284) argues, women have a ‘highly developed tactile sense’ and a ‘genius for close observation’, which has the potential to reshape the future of the academy into a place where we may ‘think through our bodies’ and undo the damaging binary between the mind and the body.

We want a reborn academy where it is speakable to say ‘my daughter and I matter; my body and health matters’, a place where children and bodies/health are included in its logic for and about all its academic workers—and not as a manifestation of affirmative action with all the patronage and gratitude entailed. Even if it entails the unseemliness of making a fuss (Stengers et al., 2014), we want to transform the institutional norms of the academy and motherhood so that women who inhabit both can live productive lives, ones that do not tear damagingly at our mortal fabric. In 1976, Rich detailed many things that needed to change in motherhood: 40 years on, we can see so much has changed and yet the deepest, most influential, social structures mostly have not. And, in that time, masculinised structures (of capitalism and bureaucracy, for example) have seeped ever-more deeply into academic culture.

Our vignettes tell transgressive stories of bringing motherhood and academic life together: children in cloisters and quads, children in library stacks, children in corridors, offices, meetings, marches; of loving our universities less, leaving them even while still having an academic life on our own terms. As ungrateful and unruly daughters, let’s pile up more and more transgressions; let’s undo the heartstrings that attach us to normative ideas of academic success, the expectations of the Father,

that we cannot fulfil. Let's bring life into our often dazzling but cold institutions, then life can do its work of bringing order and sterility to ruin.

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Response. Double-Time: Motherhood and Professorhood

Laurel Richardson

I am asked to read as an “Academic Elder Matriarch” five stories about “Mothering Relations and Vulnerabilities” written by author collectives for this book. I do.

Anne Reinertsen, Bojana Gajic and Louise Thomas introduce the idea that “learning to be nobody” gives us the power to be “anybody;” and, “anybody” has a unique story of her relationship to motherhood and academia. Tina Yngvesson, Susanne Garvis and Donna Pendergast describe how “circles” of support between academic mothers make simultaneously having a home-life and an academic-life “realistic possibilities.” Nevertheless, as Lisa Uusimaki and Karmen Johanssen argue the (near?) universal expectation that women bear and care for children creates a particular “damned if you do, damned if you don’t” vulnerability. Bronte Cutcher, Remy Cuther, Finley Cutter-Knowles, Lily Cutter-MacKenzie, Amy Cutter-MacKenzie and Alexandra Lasczik wonder

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if the loss and guilt surrounding sacrificing “mothering” for academia is worth it. Their children’s voices help answer that question. In what reads as a thoughtful response to the stories, Catherine Manathunga, Barbara Grant, Frances Kelly, Arwen Raddon, and Jisun Jung write narratives in support of a “rebirth” of the academy as a feminist institution, one that expels motherhood myths and supports all women.

The stories are powerful testimonies. Barriers of geography, age, and statuses are presumed artificial, and leapt over. The collectives honor each member’s unique experiences. No one’s voice is silenced; no one’s process derailed; no one’s gifts, limitations, or struggles denied. Poetry, dialogues, art, photographs, imagined conversations, autoethnography and flights into theory co-habit these pages. The women have risked sharing their creative work with an audience, some of whom will love it, some not.

Although I have written a great deal about my life in the university, I have never written about how it is/was for me to be a mother and a professor. That I have not says volumes. I circle around it, now, like a curious hawk, my double-time career as *both* mother *and* academic.

Now, I write a narrative of my dual career. I choose *not* to provide an analytical summary. Instead, I take heed from the lesson given me by the author collectives. Each person has their own story, life, struggle. My hope is that whoever reads my narrative will find in it a piece of wisdom or advice or support or familiarity, and therewith feel understood, supported and connected.

1958. I was accepted into the graduate sociology program at the University of Colorado “provisionally” because I was their first woman grad student and they weren’t sure how *that* would turn out.” That same year I met Herb, a graduate student in mathematics and the first man I had dated who agreed to “let” me have children and an academic career.

“I am thinking of getting married,” I told my advisor. I felt I needed his permission. “Okay?”

“What?” He fumed. “You’ve just been wasting my time and soon you’ll be wasting your brain.”

I married Herb anyway.

“I’ve learned that Herb’s the best math’s grad student,” my advisor said, giving me a pressure cooker as a wedding gift. “You’re our best student. So, your marriage is okay because you will have smart children.”

1960. Herb’s dissertation advisor accepted a visiting position at the University of Notre Dame, a Catholic university for men located in South Bend Indiana, two thousand miles from Colorado. Of course, we would go too, because Herb’s career should have precedence over mine.

Proctored by an aging priest, I took my PhD written exams in the only classroom at Notre Dame available to lay women. I started to cry. Soon, I was sobbing. The Priest could not allow me to leave the room as there was no place I could go in the building. Two weeks later, I boarded a train for Colorado for my oral exams. I cried all the way there, thinking the idea of a PhD for me was ludicrous. But I passed my exams. I had also passed the previous month without birth control (unavailable in South Bend). My tears were hormonally induced. I was pregnant.

Once the tears and morning sickness ended, I loved being pregnant. Being pregnant had nothing to do with being or not-being in a university, being or not being an academic. I wasn’t in Colorado and I wasn’t allowed into Notre Dame but I could write my dissertation in my own living room. I *luxuriated* in being pregnant and independent of institutional constraints.

1961. Birthing Benjamin was blessedly easy. But post-partum bronchitis delayed my return to Colorado. Nothing I said or did, including my doctor’s excuse, convinced my professors that I had not absconded into Babyland.

My professors could not fathom my reality. They were embedded in their patriarchal everyday world in which their wives took care of their homes and children. Their wives could not have jobs, much less careers. But my everyday life included a partner who was as out-of-sync with the dominant culture as I was. He was an equal partner in house-tending and baby tending. Because we were graduate students, writing dissertations, free to structure our time, our co-shared parenting was made easier.

Our third-year fellowships required us to each teach one class. The sociology department would not let me teach Sociology 101. They believed my presence as a teacher would turn-off potential majors.

Although I had never taken any, they assigned me to teach statistics (a required course for majors). “Not to worry,” I was told. “Your husband is a mathematician.” With Herb’s help, I stayed a week ahead of my students.

1962–1963: Although my male PhD peers were offered positions in the department, I was not. I would not have accepted a position anyway, because Herb’s career came first. Wither he went, I would, of course, follow. We went to Claremont, California, where he taught mathematics and I became, by choice, a stay-at-home mother. I thought I would play with Benjamin, read fiction, and make curtains.

I try to bring back my feelings during that time, but they stay buried. Instead what pops out are concrete memories: the requisite drunken dinner parties I hosted as a faculty wife; the requirement (if Herb were to get tenure) that I pour tea on his college’s monthly First Friday Afternoons; my futile attempts to become friends with another PhD woman, philosophy, who was always busy typing her husband’s manuscript on Wittgenstein (a philosopher I did know about); the mind chilling afternoons listening to other faculty wives bitch about their husbands. Within six months, I was angry at Benjamin, jealous of fictional heroines, and ready to climb the curtains. I could not be a full-time “housewife” and stay sane.

Then, good fortune befell me. The Chair at California State-Los Angeles asked me to teach on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Benjamin had weaned himself and the Waldorf preschool had peacocks, turtles and a two-day opening for a two-year old. Herb adjusted his schedule to fit mine.

On two long days, I drove ninety-minutes each way to teach four sociology classes that I had never taken. I loved my students, most of them older than me, working full-time, first in family in college. Teaching gave me back the identity I had willingly sacrificed by giving marriage and motherhood not just priority, but *control* over who I was and could be. At Cal State-L.A, I re-claimed my academic identity. I did not try to bring home/motherhood into the university but I did bring academia into my home. Student papers graded and classes prepared on the dining room table, Benjamin “grading” his “papers.”

Faculty mentored my writing and shaped me into a published sociologist. And more. I had a community. The faculty were an offbeat collection of men—African-American, Holocaust survivor, Canadian funeral director, recovering alcoholic, gay ex-priest. They all *claimed* their identities/experiences and welcomed me into their world, validated me as a peer. Identity was both interesting and irrelevant.

1963–1964: I was twenty-six, married, a mother with a PhD and a job I liked in California, where I thought I wanted to be. Then, an offer came that Herb could not refuse: Come to The Ohio State University (OSU) to join the top-ranked number-theory consortium. Of course, we would go. His career mattered above all else.

We move to Columbus and I apply for a position in the Sociology Department at OSU.

“Do you plan a family?” the Personnel Director asks me.

“I have one son,” I say and because, for me, honesty is my only policy, I add, “He’s three. I hope to have another child this summer.”

“Mothers belong at home,” the Director says, squirreling down in his chair, eyeing me catawampus.

I wait.

“After our son was born, my wife went back to work as an elementary teacher...”

“Hmm.”

“...and our son...he’s not married...he lives in Greenwich Village... he has a roommate...a man...”

“Hmm.”

“Well, I can’t hire you. I wouldn’t want to be responsible for that happening to your son.”

Ben starts half-day preschool and I receive a Post-Doc in Rehabilitation Medicine to study young men’s adjustment to life-altering injuries. The requirement that I wear a white coat with the name-tag, Dr. Richardson, on its lapel, disguised my pregnancy literally and figuratively. *How could a doctor be pregnant?* When Josh was born, I located a sitter a minute away. She phoned me when Josh woke up so I could come to breast feed him. I did my research, easily, because it was *my* work and because both Herb and I had complete control over our time.

“No,” I said to Dr. N., my immediate supervisor. “I won’t apply for another grant.”

I had two sons. I couldn’t bear being at the rehab hospital any longer, a place where young men who dived into shallow waters or sped on motorcycles or fell off roofs, partying, were now quadriplegics. Motherhood spoke.

1965–1970: A Visiting Professor position was offered to me at Denison University—a liberal arts college that advertised itself as “the Ivy League of the Midwest.” It was located in a small town, Granville, an hour’s drive from my home. I negotiated a three day schedule in which I taught three sociology classes as well as statistics in the math department.

At Denison, Ben sometimes came to classes with me where he focused on his favorite book, *The Way Things Work*; I hired student baby-sitters for Josh. It never occurred to me *not* to bring my children to Denison. I didn’t consider them a distraction or nuisance. Students liked having them around. I don’t remember anyone objecting to their presence although my chair objected to my absence from evening committee meetings and Denison’s unstated policy that faculty should be “on call” at all times for its students. He wanted me to move to Granville. I refused. I was not willing to break up my marriage. And, the more I thought about it, the less I wanted a career of teaching entitled students. I wanted to do research.

Denison did not support faculty research. I paid for supplies, secretarial help, and attendance at professional meetings. If I did not have a husband with a full-time job, none of these costs would have been sustainable and my research career would have been cut off before it could bloom.

1970–1972: A Swedish professor, Dr. Hans Zetterberg, had been hired to chair the Sociology Department at OSU. He had read two of my articles on the sociology of science and offered me a Visiting Assistant Professorship. He never asked if I had a husband or children. He also hired two newly minted men, not as visitors, but on the tenure track. Their salaries were 30% greater than mine. I didn’t care. I was happy to be in a top-ranked research department.

The field of sociology was growing, the supply of social-statisticians was scant, and here I was. Zetterberg moved me to tenure track, the first woman ever in the social-sciences at OSU. I became best colleague-friends with the two men who were hired when I was. The three of us did research together on topics that interested me—race, gender, politics. I did the stats and wrote the papers. They got tenured.

Then, Herb got hooked on L.S.D. We divorced. Now, I was an untenured single mother of sons, six and ten. But I was up for tenure review. Surely, there would be no problem.

1972–1974: “So that’s why it’s called ‘blacking out,’” I said to myself after the behemoth Buick totaled the Volkswagen bug in which I was a passenger. My face was broken, my leg broken, and consciousness gone. I was in a coma. Friends, I learned, took care of my children; colleagues taught my classes.

When I came back to consciousness, a doctor tested my brain. I could not do my times-tables past “5’s”. Two representatives of the promotion and tenure committee came to see me bearing caramels, although my jaw was wired shut. “The meeting is tonight,” they said. “You have to show up.” I shook my head. There was no way I could leave the hospital. “Okay,” one said. “We’ll tell the committee that you are not interested in tenure.” *What?* I thought. Later, I learned that the real reason for their visit was to ascertain how “damaged” I was and to *prevent* my tenure if I would become a medical-financial burden to the university.

A letter came. If I did not teach in spring quarter—five months from now—I would be terminated.

One of my friends found Mrs. Blue, a lovely woman to take care of my children, do our shopping, cooking, and cleaning while I recuperated at home. I needed her; my children needed her. Sometimes, she would bring her pre-school daughter with her. At the time, it never occurred to me to consider how different our privileges to do motherhood and work were. I took her for granted. I am embarrassed for myself, now.

But having my children cared for was only half the problem. How could I manage to teach my graduate seminar on the sociology of

science? If I didn't, I would be terminated. I revised my syllabus, deleting every article (they had statistics in them) and making Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* the sole text. Kuhn argued that scientific growth was not incremental but happened when an abundance of unexplained "findings" required a paradigm shift. I was *living* his theory of paradigm shift. Old rules of how to produce knowledge no longer held for me.

Could I teach? I remembered so little; I felt so fragile. I couldn't lecture, answer questions or, worse, pose questions to be answered. "This seminar is yours," I told the ten enrollees. "Read Thomas Kuhn and go from there...and let's just meet in the graduate student lounge." I didn't tell them I was afraid of being too far away from the office and his phone. I worried about my children, and about my vulnerability.

Other students were dropping into the seminar, and then faculty. Soon, there were twenty or more in the seminar. Students got experience presenting and defending their work to persons with different philosophical and methodological leanings. Students became research collaborators. I didn't "teach"; I facilitated. This was a new pedagogical paradigm. I could do *this*.

Because the sociology of science seminar was so enticing, I attracted many graduate students. And, I was increasingly attracted to feminist theory and qualitative methods—both paradigm *shifts* for me. Evening was the best time for teaching graduate seminars and I wanted to be home with my children so I taught the seminars in my living room. Two of my students brought their children. Our kids played together in the attic while we adults developed what became the first text-book on the sociology of gender.

Some seminars went on for hours. One went on for months. Some of those students became best friends. They still are. Learning in my living-room modeled a way of combining, friendship, motherhood and academia. And no-one cared if the floors were not waxed or the dishes not put away.

I joined with women faculty, staff and graduate students to lobby OSU for a "Women's Center" as a first step towards a Women's Studies department. Once we were official, we held an international conference. One of the panels focused on motherhood. None of the panelists were mothers.

“They don’t know what they’re talking about” said a new friend, Professor O., a mother of a severely physically-challenged child. We left the panel discussion, disgusted by its focus on the panelists’ mothers, not on professors being mothers.

1974–1977: Twelve years passed and I was yet to be tenured when a stroke of luck hit. A paper (“The Door Ceremony”) I had presented at a conference was “front-page” news in the Sunday New York Times, a paper read around the world, even in Japan where one of OSU’s trustees was doing whatever it is that trustees do in Japan. That man called Provost Al Kuhn, a lucky name for me, to inquire about my status. Provost Kuhn called the sociology department. “We’d rather you not do anymore of that fad research on women,” the Chair told me, “but we will put your name forward to the college.”

I first learned that I had been tenured from the football coach. He sent a form letter telling me that I was now entitled to better seats for the games. Achieving tenure should have made me one happy gal. But it didn’t. I felt angry. I expressed my anger through a siege of publishing, some of it critical of my department, some of it autoethnographic, and all of it feminist.

1978–2002: Becoming a Full Professor and being a Full Professor truly meant something to me. My voice could be heard on university-wide committees that brought in distinguished scholars and chose grantees. I felt fullness, an acceptance, power.

Feminist faculty in the humanities, social-sciences, education and allied medical departments found each other. A dozen of us began weekly meetings to discuss very difficult feminist theory. We needed each other’s input. We met for over two decades calling ourselves P.M.S., an ironic acronym for post-modern studies. Half of us were mothers. To semi-quote myself, “No one’s voice was silenced; no one’s process derailed; no one’s gifts, limitations, or struggles denied.” Perhaps we might be called a “readers collective.”

Change was happening in my department, too. The Chair, Kent Schwirian, appointed me chair of the “Planning Committee.” I selected the other members. He granted us the power to re-write the curriculum and propose hiring of the requisite faculty. We introduced a sequence of courses in feminist theory and qualitative research. We hired six women—three of whom were mothers.

I had trouble fathoming the decisions these new academic mothers made. They claimed to be feminists and they were married to academics, men who presumably had control over their own teaching schedules. Yet, the children spent their babyhoods and toddlerships in day care while their mothers spent forty-hours (or more) at the university. When I asked one woman why she was in her office on a quiet Friday afternoon, reading a journal article, she said, “I have to be here so that the faculty can see that I am here.” Her fear of judgment was one I never had.

When one of these women became graduate chair, she instituted a lock-step graduate program. “But what if a student becomes pregnant?” I said. “She could lose a whole year.” Her response still roils in me. She said, “Woman grad students should do what I did. Time their baby for the summer.” As if...I shake my head at the absurd idea that women can totally control when they get pregnant.

When I told this story to my forty-year old (step) granddaughter, another academic, she said, “Sounds just like a millennial. It’s all about me. I’ve got mine. I’m not going to worry about you getting yours.”

If my granddaughter is correct, then should a finger be pointed somewhere?

2002–Present: Children grown, grandmother, Distinguished Emerita Professor. Maybe even an “Academic Elder Matriarch.”

Afterword

This book is a compilation of collective longings for new life and new spaces—lives and spaces focused on supporting, upholding, nourishing, nurturing and restoring wholeness and possibility in the academy.

The storied research you have encountered has sought to privilege responsive, personal, creative and aesthetic ways of communicating feelings, understandings and experiences.

Thank you for sitting with and holding these offerings. May they encourage you to find your own meaningful path in and beyond university life and cause you to contribute to workplaces and lives in caring, collaborative, co-creative and connecting ways.

To conclude, we leave you with a poetic ‘benediction of sorts’ derived from ideas expressed across each chapter and response.

A ‘benediction of sorts’ for your journey

Mothering bodies and sensations...

I am feeling exhaustion. My body longs to be still, to rest, to restore.

Listen to your body, what does it long for?

I ache for some breathing room.

I am grappling with the complexities of caring for myself, caring for others, being cared for by others.

What do you ache for? What are you grappling with?

We breathe the same air. We breathe to survive.

Stop.

Listen to your breathing.

Attend to your own breath.

Follow the naturalness of your breathing, the autonomy of your breathing.

It is time to attend to our own breath. Attend to what keeps us alive.

What keeps you alive?

It is time
to listen for the answer.
Slow
down and sip
the air, still
your
presence, cultivate
the divine
in yourself.

It is time.

It is time to dream.

To dream is never an individual affair.

Let us write and receive.

Slow nutrient rich data.

Sustenance.

Motherly letters, living and writing with body and place awareness.

A sacred space.

Experimenting.

Moving.

Toward creative and jovial openings.

Shall we dot?

Engage in warm exchange?

Body to body?

Place to place?

Eyes closed. Breathing. Flying. Calling.
Nest-gathering-treasures.
Moss-grown sticks meet rainbow shells. Children's hands, orange beaks.
Flowers pointing to the moon.
Tending the needs discomfort names. Cherishing our dreams.
Expanding.
Dreamy creative connections
Dreams can come true.

It is time.

For sustainable and flourishing spaces.
Bodily places.
Kinship.
For a methodology of gifting.
Gift making.
Gift giving.
Reassembling ourselves. All those compartmentalised aspects.
All those fractured tales. Rejected. Failure. Guilt. Deadlines. Dry
biscuit-like tears.
Reclaiming.
Ourselves.
Reclaiming.
Our creative processes.
Reclaiming.
Our intuitive thinking.
Allowing words to move and interconnect.
Us.
Across space, place and time.
Making room.
You are not alone.
I see you.
I honour you.
Becoming.
Making room.
To be.
To play.

To dream.

To hold.

To touch.

It is time.

It is time. Time to dream. Time to conceptualise a more responsive university.

Time to engage fully in the physical, spiritual and emotional body in which we are dwelling.

Time to listen to our desire for authentic, relational, creative meaning.

Time to make public our contemplative practices, our creative communications, our ethics of caring.

They anchor our work, our inquiry. They keep us alive.

We will not keep them hidden any more.

We will live 'dual lives' no longer.

The academy is a beast creating a performative terror. The cost, damage and waste are felt under our skins, within our daily work and lives.

We will not keep our losses hidden any more.

We will rattle on the doors of the taboo and open ourselves to something new.

Something new for the academy: authenticity, vulnerability, hospitality, community.

We are slowing
down.

Becoming
still.

Creating
space.

For

Possibility...

It is time.

We need stillness.

Silence.

Time.

To breathe.

To sense.

To connect.

...Contemplation, noticing, listening, intuiting as daily revolutionary acts.

What are yours? Your acts of revolution?

What do you need?

What is your intention?

What do you want to find?

To birth into the academy?

It is time.

It is time to tune into our home-sickness for seasons, creating and incubating.

It is time to listen deeply.

With ears of the heart, of the breath, the soul, the heart.

The body, your body, our bodies, must be heard. Helene Cixous insists.

It is time.

To witness.

Wit(h)ness.

Be-with.

Each other.

The loss.

Lament. Wail. Howl. Mourn.

Resist. Rest.

Respond. And (re)turn.

(re)turn to your heart.

(re)turn to your breath.

It is time to engage a methodology of the heart. To heal.

It is time to not-write. And then write yourself/ourselves into existence.

A song. A piece of music.

Shall we dot?

Black dots on lines, transforming them into sound, forgetting everything else.

Testing the limits of language and institutions.

Making our own creative forms in which to work.

It is time.

Mothering relations and vulnerabilities

We are opening to possibilities

Vitality, and multiplicity.

Writing from and for ourselves.

Strange threads: forgiveness, affection, surrender, force, peace, solitude, affirmation

Becoming human.

Leaving behind the life of robots.

Sparking curiosity

Breaking out. Away.

Stepping off. Out. In.

To warmth, joy, science, love on paper.

Looking in.

Plugging in.

Making space for a more-than-human life.

Recalibrating.

Opening up.

Moving beyond.

Becoming any/all/nobody...

Loving our academic being/becoming...

Ethics of care, solidarity, passion, circles of support.

Separating identities, no more. My office a space of recognition.

Visibility.

Of all that I am.

My integrated life.

Sipping-coffee-researching-infant-breastfeeding-moments.

Conversation circles. Support circles.

Sharing where disappointment and guilt poke their presence into lives and work.

Not hiding.

Realities. Care. Compassion.

Figuring-it-out.

Allowing-accepting what is.

Opening soft spaces.

Pushing back.

Letting go of duty, and 'good girl' myths,
Pleasing ourselves, instead of others.
No longer stoic about our suffering.
We share our stories. And our scepticism.
We are choosing.
Locating ourselves. All of who we are.
Consciousness-raising. Meaning-making.
Actualising agency.
Transforming. Together.

Becoming-maternal with animals/companions/offspring/place. Cross-species acts.
Disrupting patriarchal structures with story, art, children, stillness, non-human worlds.
Interrupting. Assembling hope. Walking.
Pausing.
Listening.
Lingering.
Reminding ourselves of the connective tissue, flesh, fluids, sweat.
Wayfaring thoughts.
Movement.
Following resonance, reverberation, instinct.
Birthing and rebirthing.
Ourselves.
Continuously.
Becoming-maternal. Becoming-with.

We are thinking through the body.
Connecting tenderly, transgressively, to what has been so cruelly disorganised. Our great capacities to think carefully, observe closely, feel deeply.
We are making a fuss. Speaking out and back. Upsetting the patriarchy.
Rejecting the alien signposts and structures that seek to separate us, mind/body, private/public, work/lives.
The academic institutions within which we work were conceived without us.
We will have an academic life on our terms.

We are holding our stories.

Hearing the voices of our children, our own voices, laced with laughter and tears.

Loving connections, prowling cats, howling dogs, children on trikes, living things drag us from the delirium of academic work. Keep our feet in the earth. Being with the earth

offers freedom, from the greedy institution and its enduring sorrows.

We imagine a different future.

Loving universities less.

Bringing mind and body to life, because we matter.

We are unruly daughters.

Our textimonies/testimonies honour our uniqueness, no voice is silenced, no struggle denied, no process derailed. We inhabit these pages together. Sharing our wisdom,

(Re) birthing the feminine in academe.

Creating spaces of motherhood.

It is time.

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