1

PM-1 3½"x4" PHOTOGRAPHIC MICROCOPY TARGET
NBS 1010a ANSI/ISO #2 EQUIVALENT

National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et
des services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

Your file *Votre référence*

Our file *Notre référence*

NOTICE

The quality of this microform is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Reproduction in full or in part of this microform is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30, and subsequent amendments.

AVIS

La qualité de cette microforme dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

La reproduction, même partielle, de cette microforme est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30, et ses amendements subséquents.

THE MOTHERLODE:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE DISCURSIVE PRACTICES OF MOTHERING

by
CATHERINE SARAH JONES, B.A.

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

Department of Social Work

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

October 11, 1990

© copyright

1992, Catherine Sarah Jones

National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et
des services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

Your file - Votre référence

Our file - Notre référence

The author has granted an irrevocable non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of his/her thesis by any means and in any form or format, making this thesis available to interested persons.

L'auteur a accordé une licence irrévocable et non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de sa thèse de quelque manière et sous quelque forme que ce soit pour mettre des exemplaires de cette thèse à la disposition des personnes intéressées.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in his/her thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège sa thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

ISBN 0-315-79849-1

Canada

The undersigned recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
and Research acceptance of the thesis

"THE MOTHERLODE: AN ANALYSIS OF THE
DISCURSIVE PRACTICES OF MOTHERING"

submitted by Catherine Sarah Jones, B.A.

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Social Work

Thesis Supervisor

Director, School of Social Work

Carleton University

September 22, 1992

ABSTRACT

The problem addressed in this thesis is why women's experience of mothering if and when it is spoken comes out discursively-organised yet the discourses of mothering and thus the experience is extra-locally determined. It rests largely on the voices of four women who speak of their early mothering experiences, their isolation, their loneliness and their frustrations and also their pleasure and delight at their children. My discussion, however, attempts to argue that these real everyday experiences of middle-class women who mother in the West rarely, if ever, appear in the textually-organised discursive practices of mothering which circumscribe them. Furthermore, the disjuncture between prescriptive discursive practices of mothering and the real experience these practices overshadow feeds into a cycle of guilt and self-hate which effectively draws women into a conspiracy of silence about their own experience.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the four women 'Jane', 'Anne', 'Linda' and 'Nina' for giving so generously of their time, their histories and their experiences of mothering, Dr. Gillian Walker for her encouragement and gentle direction, Larry for his unflagging patience, support and faith in me, my mother, Peggy, and my daughters, Leila and Cassie, for so very much besides the reason why.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Acceptance Sheet	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	v
 PREFACE	 1
 CHAPTER I: Introduction	 6
 CHAPTER II: Mothers' Speak	 14
 CHAPTER III: Ways of Knowing	 64
 CHAPTER IV: Where's 'Mother'	 84
 CHAPTER V: Conclusion	 126
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 133

PREFACE

It is increasingly important in any work that seeks to be part of a broader emancipatory project not only to define the terms and the limits of one's area of debate but to place that debate within a context which neither diminishes nor makes trivial the experience of the subjects of that debate or those outside it. In the situation I find myself, the need to clearly delineate the limits of my discussion becomes not merely one of academic practice and necessity but an ethical imperative.

This preface addresses the context of the following discussion of mothering practices which has Western society, Western textually-mediated discursive practice, the experience of 'Western' women in Westernized societies as its frame of reference. Since much of the thinking, research and writing on the subject took place outside the West, in India and Africa where I have lived and worked for the last four and a half years it would have been an act of, at best, gross omission to simply state that this thesis limits itself to the mothering practices of white middle-class women in the West

and the conditions which made those practices oppressive.

I sit writing this document in an office about the size of the 'average' Canadian living-room, in a house which I/we could not afford to look at in Canada, let alone rent or buy. I go into my office in the mornings knowing my daughter will be looked after by 'the ayah', and 'the cook' will bring me tea or coffee at ten o'clock. I will be called to lunch at one to eat a meal of food 'the cook' has processed in a room she has cleaned.

'The cook' and 'the ayah' are real people; Agnes and Mary. Agnes and Mary 'live' in rooms in the 'servants quarters' attached to this house, but their families live a day's uncomfortable bus ride and long walk on dirt tracks away. Agnes has six children, none of whom lives with her. She sees them for a bare month a year, and sends eighty percent of her salary to her mother to support them and pay school fees. If and when her mother dies, her oldest brother will automatically under Luya tribal law have claim to the land, and will expect her children to leave.

Mary is in a similarly vulnerable position, but her situation is more acute as her mother is seriously ill. I know that Mary would like to go home to nurse her mother, but

she is taking a loan from us to buy her own plot and both she and myself feel uncomfortable about her taking indefinite leave. Soon after Mary began working for us one of her twin sons, her only children, died. She took a very short leave, again nervous that she might lose her job. Those are some of the 'real' circumstances and conditions of their lives, and it is those circumstances of dependency that both underwrite this text and contradictorily remind me of my own co/double dependency.

I can only do this work because of my familial circumstances. This unpaid work of writing can only be done because of my relationship with a man whose paid work takes him to places and supplies him with the means that such social arrangements of mothering are possible. My working status and the working status of everyone on these premises is predicated on the fact of his work.

As the above illustrates, my geographical and professional circumstances have required that I confront the immense disparity between the real conditions under which women mother and survive in the developing world which I am made constantly aware and the equally real and oftentimes oppressive conditions under which women mother in the West both personally and in my work. As a result, I attempted to

reconcile my confusion and wrote the following in an earlier draft:

"Every time that I sit down to write I am conscious of the ethnocentrism which is implicit in this work. I can at best hope that this thesis speaks to more than white, educated middle-class women and men in societies which are dominated by white, middle-class, male-constructed patriarchal capitalism."

To apologise for ethnocentric exclusions was to miss the point. A central plank of my thesis is the way that women are silenced not by the universal nature of the circumstances of their oppression but rather by their specificity? My present circumstances as a white, middle-class woman are premised upon a globally-articulated system of class and race relations which are, in measure, attributable to the mode of ruling under patriarchal capitalism. My apparent privilege obscures the form of oppression that is specific to my circumstances.

In the light (or dark?) of this apparent privilege it is easy to regard one's own concerns and the concerns of other white Western women, for example, feelings of being marginalised, isolated and made powerless by the exigencies of mothering practices in the West (central issues of my discussion), as inconsequential. But, of course, this too is a mechanism of control. The relative affluence and

advantage of white middle-class women in the West is largely a function of our particular relationship with those who continue to hold economic and political power: white middle-class men. It is from this 'special' relationship that most of our so-called rights accrue. Implicit to this privileged relationship is that those rights are conditional and may be withdrawn.

The claustrophobic and dependent nature of the relationship disguises from women the very particular and specific character of their oppression. The confusion that this engenders makes it hard to reconcile the enormous differences that exist between women's circumstances. The difference in circumstance merely conceals the interconnected aspects of the modus operandi of patriarchal capitalism. If this is opened to view, what it is possible to argue and from where becomes much clearer. Thus a discussion of mothering practices in the West is of value not because of its applicability to other women in other situations but because of its distinctiveness to a particular group of women who occupy a particular position to those in power.

INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of opinions, political tracts and literature of every kind on 'mother', mothering, child development, psychoanalysis, and the family makes any would-be-new discussion of women as mothers daunting at best. It is, however, the very presence of these exploding discursive modes that prompted this research. The beginning and end point is, and remains, grounded in my own experience, my incomprehension at the difference between what I knew to be true before I began the mothering process, became 'mother', and what I know to be true after the fact. The issues raised in this discussion, the nature of the data collected, and, to a degree, their analysis are a product of this recognition of disjuncture between bodies of knowledge.

This thesis has as its central concern the silencing of the maternal voice in the discursive practices of mothering in the West. With apparent irony, it rests largely on the voices of four women who speak of their early mothering experiences, their isolation, their loneliness and their frustrations and also their pleasure and delight at their children. My

discussion, however, attempts to argue that these real everyday experiences of middle-class women who mother in the West rarely if ever appear in the textually organised discursive practices of mothering which circumscribe them. Furthermore, the disjuncture between prescriptive discursive practices of mothering and the real experience these practices overshadow feeds into a cycle of guilt which effectively draws women into a conspiracy of silence about their own experience.

The practices of mothering in Western society are dependent upon the emotional and psychological investment of women. It is impossible to write on the discursive practices of mothering without acknowledging the emotional and psychological content that is vested in those practices by all players. Yet accounts which merely acknowledge that the terrain of mothering is overlaid with complex 'meaning' and emotion and launch into explanations to fit given ideological ends, whether from the left or the right, seem unsatisfactory. This approach, frequently used in analysing mothering, denies the lived-in emotional and material experience. It puts to one side, for example, the feelings of loneliness, isolation and despair which are as familiar to women who mother as changing diapers. The stated purpose of this thesis is to place those material experiences as central to our understanding of the way women are controlled through the discursive practices of

mothering.

This project began to form when I was pregnant with my oldest daughter and asserted itself as a necessary area of study during the months after her birth. Necessary, not only in terms of a broader academic agenda, but necessary for me, in order for me to come to terms with a series of uncomfortable and angry states. The cliches such as, 'Your life will never be the same again' did not prepare me for my dramatic dislocation in the world, they did not prepare me for experiencing oppression directly. The previous 'facts' about myself: white, middle-class, educated and a 'feminist', failed to buttress me from the multi-pronged discursive practices which oppress women who mother.

I was initially confused and silenced, and I have since noted that I move in and out of periods of feeling silenced and confused as I confront my own mothering, my writing about mothering and the conflict between the two. This on-going ambivalence as part of the process of writing and being 'mother' is not, I now realise, a personal characteristic of the writer. It is critically a function of oppression and the way that oppression is reproduced.

My understanding of the issues, the conflicts and the

contradictions which are the stuff of mothering, has increased as a consequence of the work of this thesis and, of course, the work of mothering itself. I cannot truthfully write that this 'greater understanding' has made me any less susceptible to the discursive pressures of which I am now conscious. This anomaly is both the brake and the impetus of this work.

"Mothers speaking", the opening chapter and the core of my thesis is the narratives of four women as they discuss their early years of childrearing. Their narratives demonstrate how they were silenced and how they were excluded from the textually-mediated discursive world which determined what was and was not 'permissible'. These narratives are so placed in order to give priority and centrality to their voices rather than to the textual world and debate that surrounds them. The narratives do include my comments however. My interjections are intended to draw attention to a process of Womaning as described in the work of Amy Rossiter¹

I 'discovered' Rossiter when I had already begun interviewing for this project. At that point, I was unsure how these experiences of mothering I was collecting were going to 'fit' into my analysis. I had imagined inserting them into my textual analysis, not haphazardly exactly, but in the hope that their presence set against their apparent absence in the

textual reality under discussion would 'speak' for itself, or rather let their experiences speak for themselves. I have to thank Rossiter making my task easier. I was going to write: 'for providing me with an organising framework', for although I organised the narratives (data) and, of necessity, was selective in what I included in my text, I tried to do so, as Rossiter's work suggests, self-consciously. By that I mean that, as far as I was able, I tried not to 'put to oneside' what the women I interviewed actually said in favour of the arguments I wanted to make.

Rossiter's thesis, from Wittig's notion of " 'woman' as a concept construction created through social relations", is that the "construction of mothering is always done in and through the concept Woman" and in order to see the actual practices which produce and oppress us as mothers we have to invert the question:

"My contention, then, is that the relationship between mothering and patriarchy can only be understood if we look not only at how women reproduce Mothering, but at how Mothering reproduces Woman. ... I am arguing that mothering is a powerful site for enforcing women's constitution as Woman. We can see mothering producing Woman in countless minute interventions of power in daily life: to be isolated, dependent, 'too fat', to have nothing to say, is to be Womaned through mothering.

"The practices of mothering in our society produce a person who is a caretaker, and her function justifies her exclusion from the public sphere in a variety of ways. Perhaps most importantly, in the economic arena, if she works in order to feed her kids her absence from the home 'deprives' them; while if she worked because she enjoys it, she is 'selfish'. Thus mother is made Woman every day through ordinary, everyday practices. These practices have been overlaid on maternal-infant attachment for so long that we have come to understand that attachment, based on biology, as necessitating a particular form of mothering called 'staying at home'. We have lost the actual history of women's separation from the workplace, while the social arrangements of mothering are made to seem the 'natural and normal' outcome of attachment."³

This conceptualization of the processes of Women's oppression through mothering practices is a critical breakthrough for feminist research. It allows us to talk about what women as mothers actually do, what they actually feel about what they do within a framework, a framework where these practices can be set against the textual reality which informs and organises them and thereby "deconstruct the ways in which our mothering arrangements produce Woman."⁴ Rossiter dislodges the centrality of the discursive practices which organise our mothering practices and exclude us. Shifting the focus to the experiential allows us to

concentrate on the relationship to the textually-mediated discursive world from the standpoint of lived-in local and particular experience, not the other way round.

The second chapter, " A Way of Knowing" attempts to provide a method and a model for thinking about the discursive practices of mothering in relation to the local and particular experience. More explicitly, this chapter encapsulates my own discursive journey to the point where I could formulate this discussion.

"Where's 'mother'?", the third chapter, looks at discursive practices which are notable for the absence of 'mother'. It concentrates on areas of textually-mediated discursive practice where I had/have the most investment and therefore felt the keenest disappointment in my 'maternal dislocation'.

1. Rossiter A.; From Private to Public, A Feminist Exploration of Early Mothering; The Women's Press, 1988;

2. Ibid, p.14

3. Ibid, p.15

4. Ibid, p. 16

Carleton University
Ottawa, Canada K1S 5B6

Text complete: leaf **13** omitted in numbering.

MOTHERS SPEAKING

This collection of narratives does not constitute a 'scientific' survey. The 'sample group' of four was selected from among a group of women I know here in Nairobi. My relationship/friendship with two of the women (I purposely avoid the term 'subject') was not predicated on the fact that we have children. Of the other two women, one belongs to the same mother/child playgroup as myself, and the other has her child at the same playschool as my daughter.

This choice of women, if it can be regarded as a choice, was based upon an unscientific/intuitive assessment of how comfortable they and I would feel talking in some detail about their mothering experiences. It had been my intention earlier to organize 'focussed group discussions', but finding a facilitator at an affordable price proved impossible. Facing the fact that I would have to conduct such a group myself, I decided on conducting a series of interviews instead. Even this decision forced me to confront my inexperience in interviewing for research purposes, and to think about what kind of effect I would have and influence I

would exert on interviewees. My initial decision to use a facilitator came from a recognition that my clearly feminist stance, well-known by the women who might agree to form part of a discussion group, might have inhibited discussion. When I asked some of the playgroup members if they would be interested in forming part of such a group, stating that I would not be leading the discussion, I received a variety of responses, ranging from enthusiastic, ambivalent, and nervous to outright aggressive.

Clearly, some of the women felt intensely vulnerable in the domain of their mothering. I received responses such as: "I'd like to but I don't think I have any thing to say,", "I hope you don't expect me say anything intelligent," etc. These mixed reactions and responses coupled with my own limitations, meant that the 'choice' of women was narrowed down to those women who were 'happy' to be interviewed, who did not feel threatened by the subject matter or by me as interviewer. I cannot pretend, then, that this 'skewed sample group' is anything more or less than four women who agreed to talk to me, but by definition, what they have in common is a measure of self-confidence, an interest in exploring and re-examining their own experience and to share that experience.

As it transpired, none of the interviewees was prepared

for the emotional onslaught that 'reliving' some of their experiences would cause. Their confidence and their confidence in me meant that in expressing what I can only inadequately describe as moments of intense pain and intense joy, they did not feel too vulnerable. This would not have been true of some of the women I had approached earlier, and while I regret that the experience of the very women who feel most silenced and vulnerable by the practices of mothering do not appear in this account, it would have taken a more skilled interviewer than myself to obtain them.

I held two two to three hour interviews with each woman and followed these up with a shorter 'conference' where we discussed my 'analysis' of the interviews. All of the interviews were taped, and while this did not appear to present any problems to my interviewees, poor quality tapes and an elderly dictaphone did present problems for me. The interviews were not tightly structured; I had a few key areas and questions that I wanted to cover, but I tried to let the interviewees talk as much or as little as they wanted within those areas.

One other factor in my choice of interviewee is that I wanted to interview women who had some time perspective, i.e. not women who only had very young children. Rossiter's

interviews are with first-time mothers carried out over a seven-month period starting with the second week after birth. What she is able to capture is an array of emotions and reactions in progress; she talks to the women in their homes, watches them with their newborns, she is present to witness the conflicts, doubts, and pleasures in the contexts they arose. My interviewees were looking on the period of their lives from before their first pregnancy over the first two, three or four years of early mothering. Although I felt that this period was of most significance to this study, the interviewees had a measure of control upon which period(s) they focussed. They too, chose to talk mainly about this early period. All the women talked a lot about who they felt they were before becoming 'mother'. This usually came out at the end of the interviews, and at first I was inclined to put this aside as being outside this 'research'. I subsequently realized that this was not simply a 'backdrop' but an important demand that their mothering be put into their context, their histories. Their need to assert their 'other' identities is in fact a critical component of their narratives.

I was faced with the necessary task of deciding how to 'organize' the material. In some senses, it would have been more readable to gather the relevant 'data' under topic

headings such as 'birth' or 'dependency'. In the end, I decided to consider each set of interviews separately. Each narrative is the property of one embodied woman, her narrative speaks her experience in a "particular, local setting" at a particular historical moment. To carve up these narratives and place them under my headings (categories?) is to do that which keeps us silent. I, of course, have been selective and have taken from the accounts moments of history which were both critical to them and to the way that we are "Womaned" through the actual and discursive practices of mothering.

JANE

Jane is the only Canadian I interviewed and the only woman who chose to have and raise a child on her own: "There was never any question of S's father moving in, marrying me or any of that rubbish". At the time of the interview she was forty-six and her son was seven. He was born in Jamaica of a Jamaican father, and she had been living and working in Jamaica for five or six years before she became pregnant. She had come to Jamaica to do her research for her Ph.D. and "my whole focus was on finishing my dissertation and re-establishing my career."

Jane completed and defended her dissertation four months before she became pregnant. While back in Canada for her defence, she remembered one of her friends noting that she'd "done everything except have a baby", this she mentioned when she said, "I thought it was an accident". The circumstances of her early pregnancy were extremely painful and violent; the day after she found out she was pregnant, her house was broken into and she was tied up and raped. As a result of the rape she began haemorrhaging: "I thought I was miscarrying - I knew I wanted this baby".

Being thirty-nine, she returned to Canada for amniocentesis and, as she was adopted, to find out more about her birth mother. "I hadn't felt I needed to know anything about her before - I really wanted this baby". Although normally given in a counselling situation, because of the pressing circumstance the information about her birth mother was received through the post after her return to Jamaica.

Thinking about and coming to terms with who her birth mother was, and her reasons for giving Jane up for adoption was a significant period of the pregnancy. Jane's decision not to have an abortion came after she received the results of the amniocentesis and the information about her birth mother. To the question, 'Were you aware of a change of state, of

things being concretely different after S was born?' Jane replied, "No, maybe because it was such a conscious decision (to have S) - such a deliberate thing that I'd been through the process (of awareness) during my early pregnancy."

Her approach and preparation for the birth was premised on: "I was only going to do this once and I was going to do it my way." She "shopped around" for the right obstetrician, and she saw four obstetricians before finally deciding on the fifth. She felt that most of the obstetricians were saying: "You don't know what you want". "The reading I'd done refined and honed what I wanted - it was a first child - originally I'd wanted it to be a natural delivery - there were all sorts of reasons why I wanted to be careful and precise about all this - I really did want to have the child without drugs and go through a natural process but if I couldn't, I couldn't."

The labour proved to be a long one which she chose not to talk about at great length. S's father, D, was with her most of the time, they went to the hospital more or less as soon as labour started. Why? "I really had no idea - I didn't have the resources of people who'd been through it - I didn't have 'birth control' classes - I mean birthing class. We just decided it was time to go." The baby was anterior presenting, and when her doctor arrived fourteen hours after

labour started he put her on a pitocin drip to speed up labour, telling her it was just to "rehydrate" her. D noted she was on a pitocin drip but said nothing as Jane specifically had asked for no drug intervention: "At that point, I would have given up control - he (her doctor or her partner?) let me keep it or at least the illusion of keeping it."

Jane returned home with S a couple of days after he was born. She had a full-time housekeeper who did all the cooking, washing and cleaning, so in theory she could concentrate all her attention on the baby. However, a month before S was born, she had set up her own consulting company and also bought a new house which was in the process of massive renovations. In talking about S's first three or four months, she concentrated on the problems of finding work, "the dwindling bank account" "I worked very hard at getting work.....Work has been a very central part of my life - always" and getting the renovations done "properly".

To the question, 'How did you feel about not working?': "It was okay for a while - I worked at having a baby, establishing a routine, getting to know him, doing research at what a good mother did - that kind of stuff. That was quite a consuming occupation but it could never have been a full-

time occupation". She saw herself engaged in three "quite discreet and distinct and partly conflictual activities": looking after S, finding work and monitoring the builders. 'How did you make the separation?' "I just did - as long as I wasn't in the middle of breastfeeding."

When asked if she had felt any self-doubt during these early months she said she had, but related it to her economic situation: "I thought it was irresponsible to have had S ... It was a gnawing thing from the time S was six weeks old - there sure as hell wasn't going to be anyone else that would take responsibility for him."

Jane breastfed S for nearly six months: "I don't know how I did that - feeding on demand - I didn't go out as much as I'd have liked. I went to Canada - there he discovered Imphalac (canned baby milk) or one of those things and he didn't want my milk."

In the second interview she talked about her politics: "I wouldn't call myself a feminist. I don't know what a feminist is. A feminist to me is someone who talks a lot and is very angry - the business is to get along as an individual whatever sex you are. ... I'm not political. I'm not archconservative, not capital 'F' feminist and I find feminist

literature really boring. I'm concerned about individuals and individual rights, but I think female individuals have been done down more than men but to get all hot.... I've also seen situations where women have taken that being done down and really done the men down around them and then cried 'poor me'..... I think women are much cleverer than men, more sensitive and have greater permission to use their intuition and their natural resources than men have. That doesn't mean that I'm anti-female but I think women can have it their way. Culture and tradition sometimes does that down, but that's a question of re-educating women to be individuals, not to be screaming feminists - and see themselves as human beings worthy of standing up and having an opinion."

Except for her reliance on "information" i.e. books, Jane denied any particular influence on her feelings about mothering or her attitudes to mothering practice. Her parents had died some twenty years before and her birth mother had not tried to contact her. Asked if she had any 'maternal role model', she said, "Certainly not my own mother - certainly not my adopted mother, I can never imagine her with a small child."

The strongest impression that I had of our interviews was her commitment to an ideology of individualism (this she

directly states above) and professionalism. In making the decision whether to abort or not: "I'm not making this choice to have a child over me." Her commitment to individualism and professionalism informed much of her thinking and her subsequent actions. In a sense, her social arrangements of mothering can be seen as a series of acts of resistance to more traditional approaches to mothering practice: her decision not to live with S's father (who was only ever allowed to stay on a temporary basis), eschewing any role models or 'maternal' influences, and her insistence on a 'natural' childbirth i.e. a resistance to the medicalization of childbirth.

Aspects of her narrative suggest a success story of latter-day patriarchal capitalism. By ignoring the influences of her own history of being 'mothered', she appears ahistorically-produced. She would make no demands on the state, believing her decision to have S to be an 'individual' one and therefore entirely her responsibility. She not only did not seek advice from other women, she actively avoided and rebutted it. Conversely, she set great store by childrearing manuals and professional 'information' in general. 'Information' was something she felt she could exercise control over, an illusion of choice. Control was a key theme of Jane's narrative even to the extent of a Freudian slip:

"birth-control classes - I mean birthing classes".

Issues, doubts or insecurities that might have been emotionally problematic are externalised. Coping with a small baby on her own, isolated (though with a live-in housekeeper not so isolated as she would have been in Canada), with no close friends was not an issue; worrying about future money problems and inefficient builders was. She asserts that it was S who made the decision to stop breastfeeding because of his preference for canned milk (although it must have been she who provided it for him).

I have to admit to some ambivalence in thinking about Jane's narrative. At one level, I admired her strength of purpose, her modus vivendi for coping: seeking 'rational' solutions and 'rational' explanations, her independence, and her sheer energy and courage. But I also felt that the ideology upon which her approach to mothering was premised exerted a very high price, and implicates all women to our disadvantage.

The "cult of narcissism", as Lasch¹ has termed the ideology of individualism, is one of the most pervasive and insidious modes of ruling. While I believe there are many problems with Lasch's analysis of individualism, his work has

opened the tendentious subject for debate. Addressing the problems of individualism presents some difficulties: how can I demand in one breath that we situate our research perspective from the standpoint of individual embodied women and then decry an ideology that asserts the primacy of the individual? I will confine myself now to the cost that I believe Jane pays.

The individual, in Jane's understanding, is not just you or I or the woman down the road. She is self-contained, self-determining, self-reliant and self-supporting, she can be compared with a successful small business venture, she is also superwoman. Jane's need to be superwoman denied her the support that was available and to some degree, organised D's behaviour as the father as irresponsible. In her narrative she talks at some length about D's failure as a father: "I hoped he'd be a better father than he is, but I never expected him to be a housemate. ... (and then) ... He was good with S, he'd play with him - look after him - but he was very much treating it as a weekend father, he was concerned and he liked S but ... When D went to the States I felt sorry for S - I'd worked very hard to make a bond between them."

D appears to have little space to be anything other than what Rossiter's has named as the corollary to 'superwoman':

"nothing man"?. Rossiter is understandably nervous about creating abstract categories into which practices fall too neatly. However, she uses the term to describe the uncomfortable circumstances of the partner of one of her interviewees: "In terms of the forms of behaviour that are possible in this social construction, he was limited to being a good helper - or being irresponsible. ...He cannot rely on historical forms of patriarchal male roles. Being a man no longer gives him exclusive control of money, property, decisions.Caught between two choices, both of which construct him as unneeded and not able, he can only continue to do nothing right or to find ways of withdrawing." In the context of their relationship to S and their social arrangements both Jane and D could not both be independent, self-determining and responsible individuals.

As the themes of individualism and superwoman repeat through the following narratives we begin to see that these discursive practices, instead of offering us opportunities for change and for reducing our workload, lock us into maintenance of the status quo, whether we are aware of it or not. These categories have become yardsticks by which women judge themselves and unfortunately, are thus judged. Women were admonished in the Seventies, to 'self-realize', to become more autonomous and career 'achievers' only to be chastised in the

Eighties for being too careerist, too selfish and for neglecting their maternal and familial roles.

ANNE

Anne, who is British, had given birth to her fourth child and first daughter a month or so before our initial interview. Her two older sons are the children of her first marriage. Her first husband was one of her professors at university and they had "been together" for four years before she became pregnant at age twenty-four. She became pregnant immediately after they had decided to 'try'. They were both delighted: "I was so excited. I immediately went out and bought lots of books - started thinking about it and planning it." Which books? "A whole range from practical advice to feminist - and books from the N.C.T. library - Le Boyer and stuff - my doctor dismissed all that crap, no support from there."

Asked about her physical and emotional 'health' during the pregnancy: "I was fascinated by what was happening to my body - watching 'it' growing inside me - the changes it was going to make to my life, to our lives ... I thought it would

make everything cosy and nice - bond us, cement our relationship. I had a very romantic notion of what it would be like ... this happy little nest. I thought everything would be nice, that I wasn't important, that this was what my mother had brought me up 'to get ready for' - it was my 'role' to be a wife and mother - and my work (I was working and trying to do a Ph.D.) and that suddenly didn't seem very important at all ... I just set it aside - I was happy to put any ideas of self aside and do what everybody expected me to do: become a mother."

Because of high blood pressure, Anne was admitted to hospital a week before her due date: "I was so fed up that when they suggested induction at term I agreed to it - I had the whole works, I had everything: a foetal heart monitor attached to the scalp(baby's), a big rubber belt around my waist and a pitocin drip." ... " I remember that first experience in the labour ward, P hadn't arrived yet - this doctor came in and gave me the worst internal of my life ... He, literally, shoved his fist up and I nearly shot off the end of the bed. It was absolutely excruciating and I was terrified and that was the start of labour. And then the next doctor came in, took one look at me and said: 'Oh God, there's blood everywhere, where's all this blood come from?' And I said, 'Go ask that fucking doctor who's just been in, he

did it,' And I was worried because they never explained to me what this blood was, whether he'd done any damage and I was really frightened and they put this machine on and then this drip, they kept twitching it up, turning it down, altering the rate, it was just awful - really scary."

The professional practice of obstetrics, like many discursive practices of the female body, has come under a lot of fire from feminists. Rich saw these practices and obstetrics in particular as restricting the bodily potential of women. Rossiter writes of obstetric practice:

"Medical discourses hold a woman's body to be a passive, alienated object which is the site of the male organized, technologically accomplished removal of babies. Such practices command women's dependency, and reinforce the subjective experience of helplessness (my emphasis) - all in the guise of helping."

In Anne's narrative, we can see the process in operation. The obstetric discourse is between professional participants. The doctors talk to each other, not to her; they look at the drip and the foetal heart monitor, not at her. The midwives\nurses (uniformly women in all the accounts) are rotated between a number of women in labour, their shifts are organised around the 'conventional working day' rather than the length of x number of labours a week. Anne begs one of

the nurses to stay on and stay with her, she does, saying: "He'll kill me, he'll kill me (her husband)".

With the so-called new obstetric practice which allows the father to be present and active, we see a new development wherein he is recruited by the professional discourse as mediator between women and professional. Now, the woman need not be spoken to at all, 'information' can be relayed through the 'father'. What was P. doing? "He wasn't talking to me, he was holding my hand - watching the machine - he was good when they came in with the pethedine, he was quite firm: 'We'll ask you when we want it.' - so he was quite assertive with them - he was good."

Were you concentrating on yourself and your labour? "No, no - I was concerned about him. I wanted him to enjoy it - I wanted him to feel part of it ... to come to all the classes. I've done this with all my labours ... always concerned that it was a shared experience, that we both got the most out of it". Did you feel it was? "No, not really, although he was clearly very moved by the whole experience." A doubt is raised here about the possibility of labour and birth being a shared experience. 'Mother' and 'Father' occupy different discursive spaces in the medical setting, even if what women can do, say and feel is delimited, there is a real

danger that that may be appropriated under the name of shared experience.

P took ten days off work after Anne and baby's return from hospital. When he returned to work her mother came. Anne had developed mastitis: "My mother arrived, I was in a terrible state, weeping - she sat down,, put a bowl under me and expressed my milk, which was a fairly intimate thing to do. My mother had never touched my breasts before ... and it kind of magically solved all my problems. She stayed for about a week ... she took over all the housework - she didn't interfere with the baby - she made it really easy and then she went home..."

Coping. "I was just getting to the stage when I thought I couldn't cope when I went back to work - I left him with a child minder and then everything seemed okay, then I coped. I worked three days a week, Monday, Wednesday and Thursday. On Tuesday we had a playgroup and took it in turns to look after the kids - I liked it when it wasn't my turn and hated it when it was. There were about nine children - it was just horrible - I hated it just sitting there with all those whiny kids."

"The childminder helped, she was wonderful, then again

she was another woman who was much more capable with J than I was. She could get him to do everything - I felt quite inadequate in her presence ... When I arrived he'd start crying and she'd say, 'I don't know why he's like that he's been so good all day.' I didn't feel a particularly competent mother. I knew my mother was better at it than me, I knew Jean the childminder was better at it than me. I knew P was better at it - when J woke in the night I couldn't handle him - P would sit there and play with him, patiently coax him back to bed. I never felt competent as a mother."

Anne felt the greatest pressure from mothering when her second son was born. She became pregnant again "just after I'd got back into shape". There had been sexual problems in the marriage before her first son was born "but when J was small the problems took a back seat - we were wrapped up in him - me as an individual or me as a wife didn't seem to be an issue for a long time - mothering did - was the most important issue. ... I decided to do something about myself. Part of the explanation I put on our sexual problems was that I wasn't very attractive and I needed to do something about my body ...tried to get myself to be an attractive wife".

"It was after he (her second son, D) was born that the problems really started. Now I wasn't working, I had a three-

year-old who was used to my undivided attention and a new baby that I didn't like very much (early on) (later) I loved D much more - I think I'd accepted by that time that babies don't do what you want them to do. D was so good and J was so shitty then. Stuck in the house, the weather bad, no money, no car - it was the worst time of my life. I'd wake up in the morning dreading how I was going to get through the next ten hours. P was very good. Sometimes he'd go to work and within an hour I'd ring up and say, 'Come home, I can't cope.' He'd come home. ... There weren't any options. Childcare was too expensive even if I'd had a job - not for two. Besides which, there was the whole guilt trip of trying to be a good mother and trying to enjoy being with these kids and people telling you, 'You know they grow up so fast, you should be enjoying this time'."

Here Anne's narrative is replete with the conflicts and tensions that constitute the Womaning through mothering, "Powerless responsibility" as it has been termed. Rich writes:

"...the woman with children is prey to far more complicated subversive feelings. Love and anger can exist concurrently; anger at the conditions of motherhood can become translated into anger at the child, along with the fear that we are not 'loving'; grief at all we cannot do for our children in a society so inadequate to meet human

needs becomes translated into guilt and self-laceration."

What Rich fails to capture is that these subversive feelings are discursively produced by the ruling apparatus in order that woman will continue to do the work of mothering. Textually-mediated discursive practice constantly denies the angers and frustrations which go hand-in-hand with the loneliness and isolation that our present arrangements of mothering bring, or they are subsumed under the 'price of love'.

Admission that the "guilt, self-laceration" and the sheer drudgery of the work has made one question one's competence and ability to cope is rarely permissible: "I had the same women friends throughout (the 'mother's support group'). When I really needed their help they didn't come through. P was away for three weeks. I really thought it was the end. I remember them all coming to my house one night, the meeting was there. I started to cry I told them all I wasn't coping and I didn't know what to do - and not one of them offered any support. That was a big turning point." Why do you think they couldn't offer any support? "I just think they had enough on their plates themselves - they all had kids - probably facing the same problems - probably facing the same

things that they didn't like to admit. ... When it came to the crunch they couldn't understand why I bitched, I had a supportive husband, most of them didn't."

Activities such as playgroups or mother-and-child support groups that bring women who mother together around their mothering, instead of facilitating friendship or intimacy, seem to have the reverse effect. This is largely due, I believe, not only to the pressure in such situations -- to conform to notions of 'good mother' -- but also because of the non-existent subjectivity of 'mother'. One can speak about one's mothering and one's children, one can even bitch about one's partner, if one exists. But one cannot mention resentments about being 'mother', and as we haven't had the language or the space to talk about the process of oppression, we are divided by our silence. What woman who mothers has not had the experience of sitting with other women, watching the children play, wondering what to say?

"I still didn't feel I had any women friends. I didn't know myself - I'd gone from being somebody's daughter, to somebody's girlfriend to somebody's mother. I hadn't discovered feminism at that time. I used to bitch about the division of labour, how I was stuck at home and wanted to do something different - but I didn't do anything about it - but

then again I felt so weighed down by these kids that it seemed impossible to do anything about it anyway. ... I was reading feminist literature but that just made me more depressed. ... Being a feminist with two small kids, no money, nowhere to go, nothing to do just didn't seem very valid. Feminism seemed to be for other people who could do something about it. But feminism with two small kids just meant more anger, and because I recognized it was unfair I couldn't think about it as a positive force in my life - it frustrated me."

Coming to Kenya and having full-time childcare and domestic 'help' meant a dramatic change: "Somebody else to look after the kids, we had money for the first time, it gave me time to discover myself - circumstances changed me rather than me changing my circumstances. (But) I was ready -- I was happy to do anything that wasn't with children. ... I took volunteer work - my first reaction was no - I wanted money - to be a proper member of the human race." This equation -- money and 'a proper member of the human race' -- is a constantly uncomfortable one. On the one hand, one can despise that value can be measured monetarily and women are actively encouraged to do so, yet when no value is attached to the work in which one is engaged except at the mythic or ideological level, then the craving to see one's value in a paycheck is great indeed.

As a consequence of returning to work, of "travelling, meeting people, learning, doing things for myself", the process of gaining self-confidence allowed Anne to make the decision to live on her own for a while and eventually divorce. After the divorce, she returned with her two sons to England for a year to complete a Master's program. She returned to Kenya with her new-born third son, married his father, and found paid work shortly after. I regret that space doesn't allow for more of Anne's narrative, but I quote fully from the end of our last interview when she talks about her ambivalence about feminism and feminist texts:

"Now it incorporates a little bit more women's role as mothers. ... It didn't address the conflicts of women who wanted to have kids but didn't have the opportunity to have good day care or have paid jobs. It didn't address the problems of working class women or women who didn't have supportive husbands or women who had low-paid jobs. Not a good trade off. It didn't take into account when women couldn't be productive members of society - one just felt guilty in those days, it just made women feel guilty about wanting to be at home with their kids."

You were reading about it but who were you talking to?

"I think I made the mistake of talking to P about it and made him feel bad. I always ended up taking the tone of complaint, my complaint about the family problems - It didn't

do a lot for our marriage. I didn't really talk to other women. My feminist friends at the time didn't have children. They kind of... I felt that they felt it was my fault - my own fault for having kids. If I wanted to be a feminist, if I wanted to be a career woman why was I having kids? And it wasn't until a few years later that I noticed that they were all having kids. At first, it was all Cosmopolitan-type women, career women who had active sex lives, sexy husbands, no kids hanging around - you know - that image of go-getting woman..."

What do you think of that idealized notion of woman?

"I'm still hooked on the superwoman idea. I'd like to think I was a woman who could have a career and an individual life style, be able to go out and do things alone travel alone and be an individual - but at the same time have a close relationship with a man, at the same time be a mother and have a good relationship with the children"

Then would you like to have a relationship with a 'superman'?

"We'd all like to have a relationship with superman wouldn't we?"

Can superwoman have a relationship with superman?

"I would if I could stop rocking this fucking pram - I'd still like to be superwoman. I'd still like to be everything to everybody and be my own person."

The superwoman construct has been in circulation since the mid-Seventies. Anne rightly characterizes it as the Cosmopolitan type woman, as 'she' made her appearance in the popular quasi-feminist press. Clearly, this notion is seductive, it must be to sell so much print. It feeds into the conflictual space between woman's learned desire to please everyone and her desire to satisfy her own needs. In a real sense, superwoman is constructed out of the uneasy marriage of women's liberatory struggles and individualism.

By the end of the Eighties, we were beginning to read about the fall-out from the superwoman mythology, but even these case histories were suspect: women with fast-track well-paying jobs and with families were feeling 'burn-out' and were taking the decision to give up their high-powered jobs in order to devote more time to their affective relationship. The perniciousness of the superwoman construct is, again, that it disguises the conditional nature of women's entry into the public sphere; if women want to satisfy their 'selfish' ambitions they must be prepared to continue to carry both the actual and affective workload that they have traditionally always borne, with the codocil that if they are unable to do that they will generally be seen to have 'failed'. A line from the film Eureka summarises the discursive versus the actual version of the superwoman myth: "I thought I had it

all but I only had everything".⁶

Anne's account, with its embedded contradictions, shows how we want to be 'that' woman. Anne recognizes long periods of her life as foregoing her identity and her needs, when she was always "someone else's ...". In political activities she was marginalized both by the Labour party for which she worked unpaid and by the textually-mediated discourse of feminism. It seemed in Anne's eyes that friends who considered themselves feminists perceived her having children as a self-inflicted injury. What she did, therefore, who she felt she was, invalidated the very politics that she wanted to support and believe in. Finding out who she was, as an 'individual', as separate from the socially produced relationships that constituted her as 'wife and mother' (i.e. by the knowledge produced about herself in her professional work) allowed her to address her personal politics. So from Anne's historical perspective, individualism and its metamorphosis, superwoman, were powerful mechanisms for change.

LINDA

Linda prefigured as one of the most resourceful of the interviewees. This may be both a personal characteristic and

an indication of the more 'socialized' nature of New Zealand society. Linda had enjoyed an extended period of travelling and working in different countries before she became pregnant for the first time. After a long separation, more than two years, she and her partner felt that they had resolved some major areas of conflict and were living together again, but in England.

Her pregnancy coincided with a period of successful career development and her first reaction to her pregnancy was "what a bum but I was pleased deep down.....It meant major upheavals - there was no way I was going to have a child in England - it was important, right from the beginning, that if I was going to have this baby then I was going to be its mother. I might work part-time but never full-time. New Zealand was a much better place..."

Feelings about the pregnancy: "Great - health wise wonderful, emotionally well... I felt great I really rate being pregnant. I was looking forward to the labour with dread." Linda came from a medical background, her mother was an award-winning nurse and her father a doctor. She, herself, is a nurse. (There was no question of her becoming a doctor as her father had already put serious obstacles in the way of her sister going to medical school.) This fear of labour

came from the conflict of her own experience and her background. "My own obstetric nursing experience had been horrific - every labour I saw (6 or 7) was abnormal: forceps, huge episiotomies, medical intervention procedures, C-sections. I felt very scared about labour - I thought there's got to be a better way ... so I read books. Coming from a medical background you're led to believe that the whole medical set-up is the best one - but I couldn't believe it. I read Le Boyer, Sheila Kitzinger's New Childbirth. I wanted a 'natural' delivery but I knew it was dependent on my obstetrician - when I got back I looked for the most 'go with the flow' one. I wasn't a candidate for home delivery (Linda had had open-heart surgery) which would have been my ideal."

Although the labour was very short, Linda's first delivery was "very traumatic and the least satisfying of the three. S had gone diving for the day, it was my due date but I said, 'First babies are always late.' A neighbour came over for a cup of tea and with that my waters broke all over the kitchen floor - I stood in a bucket - Contractions immediately - quite strong - she said, 'I think we'll go.' They couldn't get through to my doctor but they weren't worried ... but I knew things were happening quite fast - and I wanted to start pushing and they wouldn't let me. I really wanted to push and they said, 'No, no, no don't be silly, dear.' And then I have

to push so they whizz me down to theatre. Why I don't know. Why I couldn't stay in the birthing room I don't know. I think if my doctor or S had been there they'd have delivered me in the labour room."

Were you concerned about S being part of the experience?

"I wasn't worried about his needs I wanted him there for me. ... When he got there he was very attentive - but no I didn't give two hoots about his needs. Didn't worry me at all but after the baby was born it was really important to me that we were three."

Linda, as with Anne, is excluded from the professional obstetric discourse. Her knowledge of her body and what is happening to it is ignored, there is no space for her knowledge. She also does not qualify as 'needing to know' what is happening to her. As she is on her own, with her neighbour, another woman, no explanations are given as to why they are taking her to the theatre. Linda recognizes that explanations would have been given to her doctor, obviously, and S. It is important to see later, in considering her second delivery, how the knowledge produced by this first experience of childbirth is used to ensure the delivery she wants.

Linda decided to stay in hospital the full week after her

son was born. She was very conscious of the conflicting advice that she received from the nurses. She experienced ambivalence as to her position: was she one of the health professionals, therefore an 'authority', or was she 'mother' needing advice? "It was probably detrimental in lots of respects - 'Oh, she's a nurse she knows it all.' They leave you alone - too much. And you really feel, 'I want to ask about x - I can't, I'll feel stupid'. It puts you in a tricky situation - you want to ask but you don't -and the other side of that is, 'I'm going to do my own thing whatever you say.'" This ambivalence about her own personal and professional expectations of herself are echoed later in her narrative when she fears people will find out she's not 'coping'.

S'he and S had decided to not ask any of their families to come and stay: "We wanted to flounder around on our own, but Mum came up for the day when O. was three days old. It was very special. There she was, she walked in the door. It was the third day and I'd been thinking, 'Wouldn't it be neat to see Mum' - It wasn't that I wanted to ask her things or bounce ideas. I just wanted to share the birth. I wanted to sit with her and talk about how neat it was to have a baby. ... It was probably the closest time we'd had for a long, long. time. She was just there for three or four hours - I often think ...(tears)... you don't appreciate - and that's when a whole

lot of learning begins."

How was it when you came home? " A wonderful and frightening time - very alone by day and by night. S busy at work." The neighbourhood that they were living, "lots of young kids - playgroups" made the first months easier. Probably the most important factor, according to Linda, was her next-door neighbour. "If there was anything I was worried about, anything I needed to talk about, she was there. She was one of the most wonderful people, the kindest people and she got me interested in other things - spinning. And that was exciting - I could have physical achievement at the end of the day - and it was something I could do quite compatibly with O around."

As someone who was very dependent on the kindness, generosity and the just-being-there of my own neighbour during the first months after my daughter was born, I understand Linda (and Anne's) debt to their neighbours, those usually-unsung heroines to women who mother.

Initially, Linda was torn between what she had been able to do before and what she was no longer able to do. "The hardest thing was having the day carved up - that I was no longer in control of my own day. I'd always been determined

that a child wasn't going to upset my life style. Technically, he shouldn't have stopped me going anywhere. He was breast-fed and I had a front pack. When he was ten days old I went for a walk up river -it was awful the whole thing. I couldn't relax and enjoy myself because he was there, his needs were uppermost in my mind. I remember one day at the supermarket - going to the supermarket - this was my big activity of the day, right? I'd got myself organised, out the door, to the supermarket. And this woman at the checkout was really nasty, she was a real cow - a day can be made or ruined - and I was travelling by bus, waiting for buses, juggling bags and baby and needing to breast feed in the middle of the street. (The breast feeding never worried me or I thought it would never worry me - but it worried other people so it worried me.) This woman really upset me..."

In relation to public breast feeding Linda's narrative shows how it is possible to break down barriers and produce different knowledge. "That was another thing where you fed - where I could feed O. It's like when you're pregnant you have to know where every public lavatory is - when you're breast feeding you have to think, 'Can I feed him here in comfort?' I remember breast feeding in a restaurant. An older woman at the next table kept looking at me. I thought, 'Oh, shit! I've offended her.' - then I thought, 'Oh, tough.'

When she got up to leave and walked by our table I said to her, 'I'm sorry if I've offended you by breast feeding in public.' And she said, 'No, I wasn't offended. I was actually very jealous of you because when my babies were tiny I remember having to hide behind railway carriages to feed them.' I was very pleased I'd broached it with her."

Her feelings about being out, being in public changed greatly during these first few months. 'Out' became less safe. "...It was so much more comfortable being at home. If O. was upset, distraught, everything was there. You could let him be upset - if that's what he really needed. Home became ... rather than a place to go away from, (Before home was a place I hung my hat and I was away, out.) but now home became 'home'. It became an important place." This is an resonating account of the way the process 'from public to private' spheres works, a slow process of attrition, a slow acceptance that it is simply easier to stay at home.

Her social confidence diminished during this period. "We were the first of our friends to have a kid. I was aware from my own experience that a lot of people I'd known who'd had kids couldn't talk about anything else. And suddenly I'd become the most boring, mindless, child-oriented person and I didn't want my friends to see me in that way. I can remember

thinking quite clearly - 'I'd like to talk about O. but I'm not going to.'"

That process of self-silencing, of deeming our daily experience and thus ourselves as "boring and mindless", is one of the most effective mechanisms of Womanizing ourselves. In our bifurcated consciousnesses we value our pre-mothering perspective over our lived-in new experience. We have learned to have contempt for the work of mothering and thus contempt for the person who does that work.

It is interesting and unfortunate to note, however, that a new genre of writing has emerged as a consequence of more, but still very few, fathers taking over or taking a greater share of mothering work. This work has now been elevated to an art form, with men waxing lyrical about the mystical quality of their relationship with their child. Examples of this new genre are easily found in the 'reputable' press; such experiences written by women would not even find space in the women's pages.

Linda moved to a new town when she was pregnant with her second child. She had been working part-time before the move and explains why: "At times I felt angry but not at O. - angry that it had to be so but I couldn't see an alternative.

I felt angry that my brain seemed to be full of cotton wool and I couldn't concentrate... I felt basically that I was happy being with O. but... I felt I had to get back to work part-time." They moved for S's job and Linda liked neither the town nor the neighbourhood and had few friends,

One friend, however, proved very important when her daughter was born. Linda was determined that her hospital experience with O. would not be repeated. Her friend and S were both present for the birth. When they arrived in the birthing room, Linda's waters had not broken. The midwife wanted to break the waters against Linda's wishes and was preparing to do so with a pair of forceps when Linda's friend took the forceps from the nurse and told her, "She said she didn't want her waters broken weren't you listening? Listen next time." This I would argue is a different approach from that taken by 'fathers' generally: they would tend to insist on their own authority rather than their partner's. In this instance, her friend insisted on Linda's active presence to the midwife. From that point on the midwife was very understanding and supportive of Linda's requests and needs.

Linda's mother came and stayed for two weeks after the birth. "When mum left I can remember thinking, how am I going to survive each day? Day by day. If I can get through one

day maybe I can get through the next day. It was a real struggle. ... I had to be coping. I had to be seen to be coping. I wasn't going to go to the support services that I knew were available. I'd always been okay. I'd always succeeded. I thought support services were for 'other' people. I remember when Jim (an old friend of hers) came on a surprise visit. He just knocked on the door and when I opened it and he walked in I thought, 'I don't want him to see me like this.' I was in total, total chaos, my mind was an absolute mess, my house was an absolute mess I hadn't been to the shops. 'Oh my god, what am I going to give this man to eat? How am I going to get through the next few hours?'

"I wanted to sit down and talk to him but I couldn't because I had two kids making demands on me all the time. Jim seemed to be so.... well he showed very little understanding. He could have rolled up his sleeves and said, 'Talk to me while I do the dishes.' Or he could have picked O. up and played with the Duplo with him. And I remember thinking, 'It's another person making demands on me rather than helping me through.'"

The last comment is, I think, a familiar feeling for many of us. I was shocked to note that people who would have

ordinarily and previously helped make tea or generally offered to help me had I been busy, expected to be served once I was mothering. I was servicing one person's needs, why not their's as well? Expectations of 'mothers' in general (and perhaps their own mothers in particular) are of servicing needs, and perhaps there is a felt entitlement to appropriate some of that work for themselves. This appropriation is traditionally found most commonly within the partnership and has been a critical area of women's emancipatory struggles.

Linda and family moved back to Wellington. Linda insisted that a condition of the move was that they find a house in the same neighbourhood they had left. "I wasn't going to sink so low ever again. I realized how important my friends were. Friends you could let your defenses down with and they would be there." Their third child was born quite soon after their move, and Linda returned to part-time night work shortly after. This period in Wellington was a happy and productive one, in part due to the facilities available for children, for 'mothers' with small children, and to being in a familiar community. In the last interview Linda talked about the support. Her neighbourhood had a community centre that was available for 'mother'/parent run playgroups. The costs of the centre were born by the municipality.

Also partially supported by the municipality and run by women in the community was a New Mothers Support Group: "This was an offshoot of an outfit set up in the Twenties for mother and child health essentially. In recent years the emphasis has been on emotional health." The format was seven or eight structured discussions with optional creche facilities. Women were first encouraged to talk and perhaps come to terms with their pregnancy and birth. Later discussions covered allocation of time and meeting one's own and one's child's needs, changed feelings and attitudes to one's body and sexual feelings and money. "There were a lot of unmarried mums on Welfare. Some of the married women felt guilty about asking for money from their husbands - a lot of the men were very tight with money - they were very jealous of the welfare mums who could spend their money the way they wanted. Strong feelings in the those discussions: 'What is your worth and how much is your work worth in monetary terms?'"

There are a number of things about this support group that make it politically and personally attractive. First, it is nationally run and locally funded, the women are only asked to donate what they can afford. Secondly, unlike the La Leche League or N.C.T.(National Childbirth Trust) that focus on the mother-child dyad, the focus of the group is on the women themselves and their new social arrangements. There have been

a number of offshoots from such groups: women have got together to form home-based business enterprises, have organised themselves and mounted local and national campaigns for better child-care facilities and around other issues that concern women who mother.

When asked if her group could be described as feminist, Linda did not think so, although other such groups were more so. "It's a very strong and growing body becoming increasingly feminist and that's frightening a lot of women off." Why is that? "Because they don't want to be threatened, shaken. A lot of publications are becoming not militantly feminist but enough that if you wanted to be a traditional housewife at home, this was going to rock your socks off a bit and did you want to get involved with something like that or did you want something that was going to reaffirm your views that the decisions you'd taken were the right ones?"

Where's the conflict point for you? The decision to be the primary caregiver to your childrer against what is perceived as feminism?

"It's changing. How I felt with O. compared to J. (her third child) - I don't have the need to hold him so close. Ultimately it's different with everyone, the point when you don't feel it's right..."

Would you characterize yourself as feminist?

"Not really, I hold a lot of feminist viewpoints - it's a weird word. I've got just as many rights - I don't feel I have to take a back place but - in my mothering I've always thought of myself as the primary caregiver."

Is that anti-feminist?

"No, I don't know - the two aren't mutually exclusive - if it rests comfortably - okay. What is a feminist? I don't know - I've often wondered - it's a word I steer clear of because it has a lot of aggressive connotations. If you label yourself a feminist a lot of people will take a step back - are scared. It's their problem - their feelings of vulnerability against your presumed strength by putting a label on yourself - they're on the defensive."

This last exchange raises a critical issue. If mothering awakens the knowledge of our precarious identity, of our vulnerability, then strong "presumed" subject statements like feminist must tend to threaten if a woman feels that her social arrangements of mothering do not qualify her to make that same statement about herself. I believe that is the root of what Linda defines as the "aggressive connotations" of feminist - it has, in a psychoanalytic sense, a phallic quality.

Again, in summary, one of the most striking features of Linda's narrative was her resourcefulness. She used her own resources and the resources available in the community to produce new knowledge about herself and her experience. Over a seven-year period she slowly developed arrangements of mothering that suited her. Not always ideal, but the best possible within her lived-in context.

NINA

Nina's narrative is not as fully-covered here as that of the three previous interviewees. English is Nina's second\third language, she is Brazilian, and while her English is excellent it was not always easy for me to read the culturally-specific reference points.

I concentrate on two particular aspects of her narrative which were for her triumphs over Latin machismo and the inner conflicts produced by that machismo. Nina was a brilliant scholar who, nonetheless, retreated from going to university in favour of teacher's training college. "I was lucky, one of my teachers, a man, said to me, 'Nina, you can have a great career, go to the university.' It was unusual for a teacher, a man, to encourage a girl to study. I didn't listen to him

then, my sister was a teacher. But later, when I was bored with teacher's college, I thought, 'I can go to the university.'"

Nina studied biochemistry at university and went on to complete her Master's. She then found herself occupying two uncomfortable places: "This boyfriend, I met him at the university, who I was with ten years. He was very intellectual. (He was a pain in the neck.) I did a lot with him - he opened my mind. He didn't think of a house, living together - he didn't think of that. He used to despise the wives of his friends, 'She's at home with the children, she doesn't think. Women that think are women that work.' But I wanted it, to have a child. It was complicated - I guess it's the problem for Brazilian women and women in general: If you have a career what are you? I was in the middle. I had two sides. When I said to my friends that I wanted to get married and have a child they said, 'You, Nina! You're not a woman for a child.' I was shocked. I was a woman who was always trying to look nice, going to the beach for five hours to get a tan, spending all my money on clothes. Yet at the same time, I was intellectual, I was this responsible person who wanted to work have a career.

"It took a long time for me to reach this consciousness:

I want to be successful, have a career but I want to be a wife and mother too. I had psychoanalysis for four years - it was only after that, that I knew I wanted to be a woman and a mother and everything."

When two very different valuations are placed on what are seen as mutually exclusive arenas for women, wanting to have a child within a long term relationship when one has a successful traditionally male career is to choose to accept a devalued status. In order to avoid facing that choice, Nina had no more relationships with Brazilian men. This was not conscious: "I guess I didn't realize. My boyfriends were all foreigners but I didn't understand why. I don't like the macho character of Brazilian men."

Nina's husband is German, but they moved from Brazil to Canada before their son was born. She was happy to leave, because although she was a senior reasearcher and had run her own laboratory for twelve years, she was tired of research work, but admits "It would have been difficult if I'd liked my job - I don't know what would have happened - I think about that." She had had a miscarriage just before they left Brazil, at age thirty-eight. For two years they tried to get pregnant, at the end of which she went for fertility tests and was told she could not become pregnant as her Fallopian tubes

were blocked. "That was the worst moment of my life." The next month she found herself pregnant.

She was delighted and determined to enjoy the pregnancy. Although forty by this time, Nina wanted a natural childbirth with as little intervention as possible. She found a doctor and a midwife who assured her that because she was healthy a 'natural, delivery was possible.

"I loved being pregnant. I wanted everyone to know. I liked being fat and bought clothes to show off my tummy. This is very different from Brazil. In Brazil, the women try to hide it. In Brazil everyone is very conscious of their bodies. I felt free to get fat in Canada." During her pregnancy she gained fifty pounds and the weight stayed on well into the second year after A. was born. "We were both very wrapped up in A. I was studying too. H. was travelling a lot. ... A. slept with us a lot. ... A friend said; 'A baby that sleeps between you comes between you.' ... I knew that I was fat but I thought it was okay. One day H. says, 'Nina you are fat' I say, 'Me, I'm fat but I thought it was okay'."

This second aspect of her struggle against her cultural background is interesting in its circularity. Nina admits to being very physically self-conscious when younger, very body-

conscious. She spent a lot of time and most of her money on her appearance. Her marriage to a non-Brazilian man and her move to Canada are part of her escape from all of that. She is able to delight in herself, her pregnant body and her voluptuousness. But in a sense, she discovers the universality of certain modes of Womaning through the body. My 'reading' of H's decision to 'play the body card' was a way of reasserting the primacy of their relationship, that their son (to whom they are both devoted) was to take second or at least equal place.

Nina's narrative, because of its 'cross-cultural' context, provided some interesting comparisons. It is unfortunate that her narrative is the most truncated. Selecting more from one narrative than another is more a case of which came first rather than a personal decision about value.

- - - 0 - - -

Large parts of the interviewees' narratives are without explanations or analysis. I believe most of the narratives in this context speak for themselves and to us. There are a few specific areas which are included where the absence of comment is remarkable, and there are also areas of the narrative whose exclusion is equally remarkable. Of the former, the mothers

of the interviewees 'appear' in the narrative with little or no comment. Of the latter, I chose to exclude almost entirely from the narratives discussions and details about partners/husbands. This editorial decision was made on the basis that to shift the ground to the nature and 'quality' of the relationship between partners, would have also shifted the focus. That is not to say that I do not see that this 'other' primary relationship is not central in understanding the social arrangements of mothering.

One indication as to why I am unwilling or unable to make comment on the mother of the interviewees is the fact that I use the term 'mothers' when referring to them. Up to this point I have tried to either avoid the term or to use it only within quotation marks. The intent behind doing so was to avoid sliding into the use of the fantasy 'mother', the 'mother' that is the "idealization of primary narcissism". In choosing to concentrate on the material circumstances and practices that constitute women as mothers, that 'Woman' women who mother, I have, of necessity, put to one side the emotional content that binds us to the women who have mothered us. I have circumvented that experience. As I hope to demonstrate in the discussion to follow, the experience of being mothered is recoverable only through the psychoanalytic, a pathway which is currently fraught with difficulty. Until

the moment when the localised experience of women who mother occupies a 'prime time' location in the discursive especial care must be taken in making a clear separation between the experience of mothering and being mothered however closely the two appear related.

That being said, in all four narratives the mothers of the interviewees featured as negative and positive forces and a significant part of the interview time was spent discussing this primary relationship and all the pain and contradictions embedded within it. It remains an enigma to them as it does to most of us. The degree to which this is true can be illustrated by a straw count I 'conducted'. Of all the women I have asked, maybe fifteen or twenty, only one of those was able to finish My Mother My Self. Most found it too painful, too uncomfortable - and too hopeless.

We are, however, as was shown in the narratives, given moments of knowledge, moments when we know that the mythic powerful subject position we endowed her with in the attainment of our own subjectivity is fantasy. We are too psychically, mythically, and linguistically attached to our illusions of our own subjectivity to ever break completely free of Her, but there are those moments, moments of life/birth and death, when 'mother' and daughter who mothers

can meet as the precarious transmuting subjects that they are, and enjoy instances of recognition that are "special" "magical" and, of course, painful. It is appropriate, I think, that the next chapter begins by addressing what is exacted as a consequence of giving pre-eminence to the 'fantasy' mother of childhood.

1.Lasch C., The Culture of Narcissism; W.W.Norton & Co; New York and London, 1979.

2.Rossiter A., op cit., p.146

3.Ibid. p.146

4.Ibid, p.218

5.Rich A. Cf Woman Born Motherhood as Experience and Institution (W.W.Norton and Company, New York, London 2nd ed.1986 1st ed 1976) p.52

6.Eureka, dir. N Roeg, Great Britain, 1983.

7.Kristeva J. Stabat Mater The paradox: mother or primary narcissism, The Kristeva Reader edited by Toril Moi (Basil Blackwell Ltd., London) p.161

8.Friday N., My Mother, My Self, Dell Publishing Co, 1977

WAYS OF KNOWING

I begin this chapter on methodology with a quotation from Julia Kristeva' which I have found to be the most useful touchstone in approaching the discursive practices which affect, refer to, form and inform the practice of mothering:

"First we live in a civilization where the consecrated (religious and secular) representation of femininity is absorbed by motherhood. If, however, one looks at it more closely, this motherhood is fantasy that is nurtured by the adult, man or woman, of a lost territory. What is more, it involves less an idealized archaic mother than the idealization of the relationship that binds us to her, one that cannot be localized (my emphasis) - an idealization of primary narcissism. Now when feminism demands a new representation of femininity, it seems to identify motherhood with that idealized misconception and, because it rejects the image and its misuse, feminism circumvents the real experience that fantasy overshadows. The result? - A negation or rejection of motherhood by some avant-garde feminist groups. Or else an acceptance - conscious or not - of its traditional representations by the great mass of people, women and men"

This long paragraph contains within it all the central and

essential issues that form the basis of this thesis.

Kristeva has isolated the two major areas of concern that prompted me to write on mothering. Firstly, she draws attention to the fantastical nature of motherhood and by doing so questions the very existence of a discursive space for a 'mother's' standpoint. Secondly, she recognises feminism's general failure to recognise this discursive 'hole' which has led to much feminist literature on mothering implicitly denying women who mother a speaking voice. Kristeva's analysis of 'mother' in discursive practice has its roots in French post-structuralist thinking of the Seventies and Eighties and as such it is primarily a linguistic therefore textual analysis. It is in the textual world where the absence of an authentic 'voice' is evident.

A post-structuralist analysis could, perhaps, in abler hands than mine, provide a methodology that satisfactorily explains the absence of the 'real mother' in language, and at the same time reclaims a discursive space for the lived-in experience of mothering. Kristeva, as we will see later, attempts to do just that. However, such an approach tends to argue for another language altogether, a form of linguistic separatism which has an alienating rather than resonating tone. This path has been taken by a number of women writers

writing about mothering, often with dramatic effect.

Kristeva¹, Irigaray², Cixous and Clement³, and Rich⁴, to a lesser extent, attempt to escape from (patriarchal) language to express '(m)other'. This is a very tempting avenue and one that I played around with in the process of my own writing. While this will be discussed later in some detail, I abandoned this approach, among other reasons because I recognised the thin line between the creation of a would-be new discursive space and a private/privatizing (and therefore elite) language. This decision coincided with my early interviews. While I could 'take liberties' with language in the expression of my own experience, I could not to take the same risk with the experience and language of other women.

The strength of a post-structuralist method lies in its capacity to deconstruct discourse. Structuralism, as developed by anthropologist Levi-Strauss, is a scientific semiotic analysis, a means of understanding the symbolic codes of a culture. At its crudest, semiotics is the deconstruction of meaning. As Culler describes it, such analysis "treating as signs objects or actions which have meaning within a culture,.....attempts to identify the rules and conventions which, consciously or unconsciously assimilated by members of that culture, make possible the meanings which the phenomena

have". To practice semiotic analysis is to dislocate the conscious subject as having any control over meaning and is thus an "act of demystification, of exposure."

The break which marks the post-structuralists as different from structuralists and therefore useful in a feminist enterprise, is the work of Derrida and Foucault, particularly that of Foucault on the theory of discourse and power.

Chris Weedon in her defence of poststructuralist method as a potentially powerful methodology for feminist research writes:

"The analysis of the patriarchal structures of society and the positions that we occupy within them requires a theory which can address forms of social organization and the social meanings and values which guarantee or contest them. Yet it must also be able to theorize individual consciousness. We need a theory of the relation between language, subjectivity, social organization and power."

In the context of this project, poststructuralism immediately offers some hope in confronting the absence of a subject position, 'mother', which accurately (rather than mythically or fantastically) represents the material experience of mothering. The humanist discourses of a

thinking, speaking, knowing and, of course, male subject have been critiqued and broken down by the work of poststructural theory. This does not mean that a cult/ure of individualism does not prevail as a dominant ideology in Western society, but that we now have available to us an avenue for questioning it at the personal and political levels. The issue of a satisfactory subjectivity for woman in a textual universe will continue to occupy feminist writers, for while subjectivity may be reducible to a construct it also "refers to the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world" that have meaning to HER.¹⁰

The above suggests a paradox, how can one argue for a theory that intentionally dissolves and deconstitutes the subject and at the same time, argue for its value as a tool for reconstructing a (new?) feminine subjectivity? Firstly, I do not believe poststructuralism is capable in and of itself, of doing so, but what it can offer is another way of thinking about our subjectivity; "Poststructuralism proposes a subjectivity which is precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak."¹¹

We can therefore conceive of our subjectivity as forming

and reforming within discursive fields, exposing a non-unitary discursive subject which is linked to the 'meaning' and the imperatives of a given discourse. Explanations are unnecessary at this point, if the 'presence' or 'absence' of a subject within discourse can be recognised as the property of the discourse and not a property of the embodied women to which the subject refers. It is in understanding the tenuousness of the relationship between the subject in a "textually-mediated" discourse¹⁷ and the referent of that subject that allows us to insert and assert our material experience into that discourse.

We can go no further with a discussion of the subject in discourse until we have considered ways of conceptualizing discourse. Discourse, in both its dictionary definition -- conversation -- and its expanded sociological meaning, has become common academic parlance. Although Foucault is regarded as the most important 'discourse theorist', his work is preshadowed by French anthropologist, Pierre Bourdieu. In developing a discourse about anthropological practice, he was interested in finding another way of conceptualising the ground of custom or "pre-law to show that the customary rules preserved by the group memory are themselves the product of a small batch of schemes enabling agents to generate an infinity of practices adapted to endlessly changing

situations, without those schemes ever being constituted as explicit principles."" He goes further to write; "the rules of customary law have some practical efficacy (only) to the extent that, skillfully manipulated by the holders of authority within the clan, they 'awaken', so to speak, the schemes of perception and appreciation deposited, in their incorporated state, in every member of the group,"."

Bourdieu's concerns, unlike those of Foucault, were of professional discursive practice i.e. only by understanding the nature of discourse, discursive practice and its place in the construction of power could the anthropological observer confront and, presumably compensate for, her "outsider-oriented discourse"."

In his sometimes ethnocentric attempts to rethink professional practice, (e.g. "Native experience of the social world never apprehends the system of objective relations other than in profiles, i.e. in the form of relations which present themselves only one by one, and hence successively, in the emergency situations of everyday life.""), Bourdieu offers useful illustrations of a) the real texture of discursive practice set against b) the textural form that the same discursive practice will take in descriptions which "draw on the highly ambiguous vocabulary of rules (his emphasis), the

language of grammar, morality, and law, to express a social practice that in fact obeys quite different principles."¹⁷

Bourdieu is a convenient starting point for thinking about discourse as he uses it in a fairly simplified context AND he acknowledges materiality of discourse which often appears to have been lost in later discussions ; 'discourse babble' as Henriques et al have termed them¹⁸. From conceptualizing discourse as a "batch of schemes" which can be used to regulate attitudes and practice regarding, for example, theft in 'primitive' society, we can begin to think about discourses in the West as "bodies of statements"¹⁹ on a subject produced in and by the institutional forms of that society.

Foucault provided a way of seeing, a method, of the way these bodies of statements are produced. His interest lay in the history of the production of knowledge, how our collective knowledge of a concept was produced. He did so by tracing the history of concepts such as sexuality and mental illness; "concepts central both to the human sciences and in the administrative and regulatory practices which are formative of the relation between people and the apparatuses of administration"²⁰. This produced a "new kind of history "²¹ reconstituting the "conceptual object from a point of view in

the in the present²² This defines a discourse (of mental illness, for example) as inclusive of the history and practices of all the institutions and social apparatuses which have "mental illness as their targets"²³. The expanded notion of discourse has led, as Henriques et al point out, to an uncertainty as to the limits of its application and the questions "Is everything discourse? Are all practices captured within the expansive nets of the discursive? And can we escape from it?"²⁴ These apparently academic questions are felt by those of us who are 'trapped' within a discursive field.

The work that Foucault was engaged in was that of deconstruction, showing how the received wisdom about a concept is in fact the product of a complex interplay between different institutional forces produced over time. As Henriques et al. write:

"What this kind of deconstruction asserts is that any given body of statements, whether in everyday conversation or a scientific paper, depends on a number of other bodies of statements, some of which carry deeply entrenched convictions and explanatory schemas fundamental to the dominant form of making sense of the world at any particular period in a culture."²⁵

Putting aside for now the uncomfortable questions raised

earlier about the limitations of discourse analysis, deconstruction presents a way out of the confines of deterministic discourses. It allows us to see that meaning is not fixed and discourses are not rigid atrophied entities. Again, Henriques et al. while proposing a definition of discourse that is regulated and systematic recognize that:

"the rules are not confined to those internal to the discourse, but include rules of combination with other discourses, rules that establish differences from other categories of discourse, the rules of production of the possible statements. The rules delimit the sayable. (my emphasis) But they do not imply closure. The systematic character of a discourse includes its systematic articulation with other discourses. In practice, discourses delimit what can be said, whilst providing the spaces - the concepts, metaphors, models, analogies - for making new statements within any specific discourse"²⁶

The underlined statement acknowledges the limits of the sayable within discourses. At the beginning of this chapter, I mentioned writers such as Kristeva, Irigaray, Cixous and Clement who have, in their writing, questioned the 'law' by attempting to say the unsayable. Their acts of writing are revolutionary acts against a dominant discourse, what is largely regarded as the ultimate patriarchal discourse of psychoanalysis. Their writings, particularly those of Cixous and Clement, are a series of imaginings of a discourse where

the repressed and the silent is not 'woman, (m)other,...', a flight from language in language. Their intention is summarized by Cixous:

"Everyone knows that a place exists which is not economically or politically indebted to all the vileness and compromise. That is not obliged to reproduce the system. That is writing. If there is a somewhere else that can escape the infernal repetition, it lies in that direction, where it writes itself, where it dreams, where it invents new worlds."''

It marks a familiar desire to transcend the limits of discourse, to short-circuit the proscribed routes for inserting new 'meaning' into discourse. Indeed, the task I am engaged in at this moment, arguing for discursive space to open up in mothering discourses within the framework of an academic discourse, has appeared an impossible one, as if acquiescence to one discursive form obviates resistance in another.

Another nagging doubt about introducing 'subversive' linguistic forms to break up and dislodge patriarchal discourse and language is that they do not necessarily re-introduce the 'real' back into discourse. Often this is not the intent of such writing; questioning the dominant discursive forms does not of itself speak to those who have no

place within those discourses.

While it has been necessary to engage with the definitions of discourse, there is a danger of drowning in forms of analysis which push material experience further away and further back. It is an unavoidable part of a process of critique. If I intend to question the discursive forms which deny women's experience of their lived-in world, the requirements of this discourse insist that I work within its terms of reference -- those of professional academic debate which by definition marginalize the private/privatizing experience of women. This conundrum cannot be stated often enough and although we, fortunately, have evidence of correctives to this trend, the tendency to prefer the form of academic argument over the content (the substance of experience) continues.

Dorothy Smith may not appreciate her body of work being classified as a corrective. However, she provides an additional tool of analysis which charts a course between discursive practice, the production of knowledge and lived-in experience ("the actual practices, actual activities, taking place in real time, in real places."²⁸). Smith introduces into the discussion the notion of a "textually-mediated" discourse. This of itself is not new, Foucauldian analysis is

primarily a textual analysis, but Smith argues that she has "displaced the central place ...given to the textual, bringing into view the social relations in which texts are embedded and which they organise."²⁹

The emphasis is no longer the text itself but on the way the texts organise practice in relation to the texts. This is a marked shift of theoretical weight from the textual forms of discursive practice to their material presence in the organization of actual practices within an existing set of social relations. Foucault's approach has been criticised for reducing the 'real' to mere effects of discourse. Compare this to Smith's ambitions for a "concept of a textually mediated discourse" that can capture the "dialectic between the active creative subject (i.e. an actual woman) and the organization of her activity in and by texts coordinating it with the market".³⁰

This approach, in the first instance, has much to recommend it. It counters the questions raised earlier about the vagueness of discourse and therefore its limitations. In Smith's analysis of 'femininity' (a much less thorny proposition than mothering) she writes:

"I want to view 'femininity' as a social organization of relations among women and between women and men which is mediated by texts, that is,

by the materially fixed forms of printed writing and images. We must not begin by conceiving of women as manipulated by mass media or subject passively to male power, but recognize when we speak of 'femininity' that we are talking about how women's skills and work enter actively into textually-mediated relations which they do not organise or produce.""

The central reason for optimism in her proposal is its capacity to insert women's real and active presence in relation to the texts, despite the fact that she may have no active part in the organization and production of those texts. It suggests a competence on women's part to adjudge, to discriminate and, perhaps, to resist the practices prescribed by textually-mediated discursive forms -- a competence to recognize disjuncture between actual practice and the textual representation of that practice which intends to organise and reproduce it.

This represents a vital leap forward, the 'missing link' in Kristeva's exposition on mother/hood. It answers the question; How does she know? And, for that matter; How do I know that she knows? If discourse tends to be totalizing, then how can it be known that the real experience of mothering is circumvented? For despite Kristeva's grounding in psychoanalysis, and her use of psychoanalytical archetypes to

exemplify the lack of the maternal, ("Let us call 'maternal' the ambivalent principle that is bound to the species on the one hand, and on the other stems from an identity catastrophe that causes the Name to topple over into the unnameable that one imagines as femininity, non-language or body"') it is, nevertheless, her experience of becoming mother, that produced that 'knowledge'. In her 'other' mode she notes: "All those words, now, ever visible things to register the roar of a silence that hurts all over.....Paradox: deprivation and benefit of childbirth"''

Integral then to any understanding of the interplay between discursive practice and an embodied subject is an understanding of the production of knowledge and understanding how the "objectified forms of knowledge structure the relation between the knower and the known."'' Again, Smith's work seems to offer the most concrete approach to the production of knowledge in the construction of a "textual reality". The issues for her are the understanding of the material processes of the production of textual reality i.e. the actual work of writing, making films, creating images in particular professional settings, and the transformation of those processes into knowledge. "The known is given shape, is determined by the distinctive social organization of its production. Yet the social organization does not appear in

the final product, the object known."³⁵ These socially-organized processes are set against that which is apparent to the reader of the texts: "But knower has access within the textual mode only to the object of knowledge as it has been given shape in such processes. Her knowledge is closed by a boundary that remains invisible."³⁶

But there exists another knowledge which is generally ignored or marginalized by textual reality, that of our direct (unmediated?) experience of our "particular, local world"³⁷. Super-imposed upon our actual experience of the world around us is our knowledge of society, a knowledge acquired through texts which "stands in for an actuality that is not directly accessible"³⁸. This preformed, socially organised knowledge represents the bulk of our shared understanding of our culture/s. How we apply our skills in interpreting and making sense of this knowledge is largely dependent on the dimensions of our "particular, local world". The settings we find ourselves in, the work we do, the race, class and sex we belong to, all bear upon our relationship to the texts. This is not to suggest that there is any clear, mappable correlation between the material facts of our existence and our capacity to recognize the "relations of ruling" hidden in the texts. Smith talks about the bifurcated consciousness of occupying different discursive spaces within her actual

"everyday/night life". Our ability(?) to live in a state of bifurcated consciousness makes it difficult to question the discursive practices which bring this about.

In the textually-mediated discursive world of Western liberal democracy there is, in terms of the actual available time to ingest 'information', an infinity of textual material. Opposition and contradiction have been absorbed into the mode of ruling and transmitted through texts. A pluralism is cast as appealing to 'minority' interest groups, oppression is thus disguised as the competing but equal interest of sections of society. The infinity of apparent choice of texts means the knower can exercise a measure of control over her textual reality, enough, at least to allow her to live with her bifurcated consciousness and still qualify as 'sane'!

The outstanding question of this chapter is, at what point does this sustainable tension between direct experience of one's lived-in world and the textually-mediated "world-in-common" break down? The point, I will argue, coincides with a dramatic shift in one's lived-in world that shifts one's relationship with the textual world. The changed standpoint of one's experience produces disjuncture with one's 'chosen' textual reality which was hitherto masked.

Becoming 'mother' is one of many possible moments of recognition, when the knower knows that she is structured by a "discursive world capable of pretending she doesn't exist." There is no single form that this knowing takes. Knowledge of disjuncture, knowledge of exclusion, by definition is 'unsayable', therefore it is felt, 'ex-pressed' at the physical emotional level.

Amy Rossiter characterises her becoming a mother as a coming to anger. More commonly this disjuncture is experienced as a silent grieving (and regrettably now normalized as postpartum depression). My own experience was one of flipflopping between rage and silent despair, sandwiching the series of moments of 'indescribable' pleasure which are also the stuff of mothering.

The next chapter considers discourses and discursive practices which directly or indirectly "target" mother. Given the omnipresence, explicit or implicit of the concept 'mother', I have been selective. The selection is no more nor less arbitrary than any selection, but it reflects the discursive world in which I was most engaged prior to, and after having a child. It was against those discursive fields that my alienation was felt.

1. Julia Kristeva is firstly a linguist who came from Bulgaria to Paris to complete her doctoral research with a predictably strong grounding in Marxist theory and the Russian formalists. She rapidly became part of the French structuralist and post-structuralist coterie. She worked closely with both Roland Barthes and Lucien Goldman. Barthes said of her, "Kristeva was always foreign to the theoretical scene she was in, radically subversive even of the new science of semiology." (Toril Moi, p.3)

2. Kristeva J., op cit., p.161.

3. Ibid, p.161

4. Irigaray L. Speculum of the Other Woman trans. Gillian C. Gill, (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, N.Y. 1985)

5. Cixous H. and Clement C. The Newly Born Woman trans. Betsy Wing (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1986)

6. Rich A. op cit.

7. Culler J., The Pursuit of Signs, Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction; Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1981; p.31

8. Ibid, p.32

9. Weedon C., Feminist Practice and Post-structuralist Theory, Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1987; p.12

10. Ibid, p.22

11. Ibid, p.33

12. Smith D, Femininity as Discourse, unpublished paper, 1987; p.1

13. Bourdieu P., Outline of a Theory of Practice, Trans. R. Nice; Cambridge University Press, First Edition 1972, Trans. 1977; p.16

14. Ibid, p.17

15. Ibid, p.18

16. Ibid, p.18

17. Ibid. p.20

18. Henrique J. et al, Changing the Subject, Psychology, Social Regulation and Subjectivity, Methuen, London and New York, 1984; p.105
19. Ibid, p.103
20. Ibid, p.100
21. Ibid, p.100
22. Ibid, p.100
23. Ibid, p.100
24. Ibid, p.105
25. Ibid, p.104
26. Ibid. p.106
27. Clement C., Cixous H, op cit., p.ix
28. Smith D., unpublished paper, 1987; op cit. p.2
29. Ibid, p.4
30. Ibid, p.3
31. Ibid, p.2
32. Kristeva, op cit.; p.162
33. Ibid, p.168
34. Smith D.; unpublished paper, 1989, p.67
35. Ibid, p.66
36. Ibid, p.66
37. Ibid, p.65
38. Ibid, p.66
39. Ibid. p.65
40. Rossiter A.; From Private to Public, A Feminist Exploration of Early Mothering; The Women's Press, 1988;

WHERE'S 'MOTHER'?

In the spring of 1988, when my daughter was barely six months old, I took a course in Feminism and Psychoanalysis. For some time, these had both been areas of interest and academic study, and in the former an area of political activity. The course was in the form of a seminar discussion, individuals giving presentations on the readings which were then discussed by the group. This suggests an intimacy and camaraderie which, of course, are rarely present in academic circles. Nevertheless, the intent behind such seminar sessions is to create a certain comfort level so as to allow useful discussion.

This course, was the second of two courses on the same evening each week. I usually arrived a few minutes late, running and out of breath, and frequently had to leave hurriedly to collect my daughter from her babysitter. Initially, I used these circumstances to explain away my feelings of exclusion and my 'unwillingness' to speak: I was distracted, I was less well-prepared. But while the particular texts (books, readings) were unfamiliar, the

discourses and the setting were not. As well, the content of much of the discussion referred to the development of the psyche in the first year of life and its gender formation as structured by its relationship to/with its gendered parent, i.e. part of a process in which I was actively and creatively engaged in my everyday/night world. But I barely spoke.

Finally, I was asked directly to relate my experience of mothering to the texts. I could not I could not speak to the texts that spoke about me. I could not discourse. As mother, I was excluded from the discourse, but to speak as author/ative academic was to deny my lived-in experience of mothering. After that, I attended the seminars infrequently and worked on the proposal for this thesis as the final paper.

The above is a fairly accurate account of my reflective understanding of what happened, but there was no burning moment of revelation. When asked to speak, I felt shamed, embarrassed: 'Now everyone knows I'm a mother', 'I don't know what to say', and then the shame at feeling ashamed. The purpose of this story is twofold, to illustrate how the dislocation of becoming mother in the discursive is experienced as public disorientation, 'the queen wearing no clothes', and more importantly, it lead to my sense of abandonment by the discourses that had previously been so

entral to my personal and my political life.

The first point is important in so far as it draws into my account the professional discourses which determine what actual practices are possible in institutions and the public domain. For example, in London Heathrow's newly built arrivals terminal none of the public washrooms has a facility for changing nappies. The wash basins are not set into a counter so a child cannot be changed between basins, and the floor is the only place that can be used. Hundreds of thousands of parents/women with infants pass through the terminal but clearly they did not exist in the architectural schema. As a result, the act of changing a nappy in such conditions (getting oneself and child on the floor, placing something under the child to protect it etc.) make it an even less 'acceptable' public act. My behaviour is socially-organised as inappropriate by architectural discursive practice.

My expectations of architectural discursive practice are such that I am barely surprised that my self and my needs as mother are not conceived of in airport design. The distress and rage that I experienced on discovering that my standpoint as mother was marginalized by feminist discursive practice were of a different order. This chapter concentrates on an

analysis of texts which critically form part of the feminist discourse and have, as their explicit political purpose, the interests of women who mother as central.

A classic phase of adolescent angst is the disappointment and rage experienced on discovering that one's parents are not always right and do not have all the answers. It is reasonable, I think, to use this analogy as descriptive of my reaction to feminist discourse post-having a child. This 'phase' forced me to recognize the extent to which I had unwittingly accepted feminism as another patriarchal discourse capable of providing all the answers if one abided by the conventions. I had embraced it as a protective cloak against the monolithic academic discourses. Feminism's new 'presence' as a public discourse, at the time I returned to university, had broken down disciplinary apartheid. One could go anywhere, textually speaking, to explain the persistence of women's oppression. Yes, I was critical of feminist analysis, but then feminism is a discourse founded on critique. It was beyond my imaginings that feminism did not provide, within its discursive framework, spaces to express the 'reality' of women's oppression.

Coming to a better understanding of the process of the production of knowledge, the ordering of information, and thus

the nature of discourse, contradictorily both reaffirms my faith in a feminist sociology and makes me aware of its limitations. A quotation from Dorothy Smith describes some of the material causes for the apparent closure of the public feminist discourse:

"As we evolve a discourse among women, it crystallizes the issues and concerns of those of us who got there first and have defined the types of statements, the relevances, the phenomenal universe and the conventions that give it a social form independent of the particular individuals who are active in it....As women's discourse becomes institutionalized, it is built upon exclusions that it has produced but takes for granted." '

Second-wave feminism's claims for itself have tended to be sweeping and inclusive. They have tended to deny the historical specificity of the grassroots women's movement and its later transformation into a public discourse i.e. 'something happened' within the West's liberal democratic tradition that created a new space for women to speak about their lives and their frustrations to other women and collectively recognize their oppression - that coming to consciousness was a 'given' of a historical moment.

The need to capitalize on this discursive victory may have contributed to its later denial. Revolutionary movements

are not known, beyond the level of rhetoric (the personal is still political?), for recognizing the sets of circumstances which brought them into being. They are better known for rewriting history, giving authorship of the movement to particular individuals or trends which suit their political imperatives.

Let us take as an example the introductory paragraphs of Benhabib and Cornell's Feminism as Critique, a book currently gaining ground as a 'major feminist text'. I, necessarily, quote the two paragraphs in their entirety;

"The emergence of an independent Women's Movement alongside and in some cases out of the New Left in Europe and North America in the last twenty years has led to a significant restructuring of our theoretical tradition from a feminist perspective. After an initial period of 'deconstructing' the Western intellectual tradition, in which feminist theorists uncovered the gender blindness as well as the gender biases of this heritage, the task of feminist 'reconstruction' began. Focussing on women's concrete experiences across cultures, society and history, feminist theorists asked how the shift in perspective from men's to women's points of view might alter the fundamental categories, methodology and self-understanding of Western science and theory. The essays collected in this volume emerge from this feminist project of a theoretical reconstruction. They engage in this task by addressing, with various degrees of

explicitness, the different strands of twentieth century Marxism. While some contributions confront the claims of twentieth-century Marxism directly, others seek to extract from the theories of the Frankfurt school. Jurgen Habermas, the phenomenological existentialism of Sartre and de Beauvoir and the critical theory of Michel Foucault, such elements as might illuminate women's experience. Common to all chapters of this volume, however, is the conviction that the confrontation between twentieth-century Marxism and feminist thought requires nothing less than a paradigm shift of the former. We can describe this shift as the 'displacement of the paradigm of production.'

This tightly written piece of prose reduces twenty-five years of political history, actual and theoretical work, the experiences of women 'across cultures, society, and history' to one paragraph of 'objectified knowledge'. The claim of the first paragraph is that the basis of feminist theoretical reconstruction is women's experience. Why then, in the second paragraph, do we not read, in place of the underlined: 'others seek to demonstrate how women's experience might illuminate the theories of the Frankfurt School,....'? We do not read it because there are few if any references to women's direct material experience in the text.

The debates that take place within the text are debates

21 of/de 2

PM-1 3 1/4"x4" PHOTOGRAPHIC MICROCOPY TARGET
NBS 1010a ANSI/ISO #2 EQUIVALENT

PRECISIONSM RESOLUTION TARGETS

PIONEERS IN METHYLENE BLUE TESTING SINCE 1974

METED

1480 COUNTY ROAD A, BURLINGAME, OH 44017, USA
TEL. 440 489 7800 FAX 440 489 7801 TLE 04888888

which refer to their own terms of reference. It is a discourse between textually-mediated discourses and conforms to 'laws' of textual reality. This accords relative values to concepts, theories, views of history and material experience. The form of the debate seems to undercut the political intent of the writers/writing.

To critique a feminist text from an 'outsider-oriented' stance feels risky, anti-intellectual, a mark of "second-rate thinking", fears that were felt by pioneering women academics as they broke down the bastions of masculinist discursive practice. Trained and experienced in academic feminist discourse, I am a competent reader of the above text, I am admiring and appreciative of its 'contribution to feminist theory and method'. It doesn't, however, make my lived-in experience more "sociologically visible".

Stanley and Wise in an historical review of women's attacks on the social sciences in the Seventies write:

"The subject-areas sociology is concerned with are artificial constructs which distort human experience. One consequence of this is that women's 'social presence' within these areas of life is high although their 'sociological visibility' is low. In other words, although women are frequently massively present within whatever is studied, we but rarely appear in the end products

of this."⁴

Although Benhabib and Cornell's wish is to move feminist critique and analysis away from being a mere addendum to sociological and political thought, to insist upon its necessary centrality, they also persist in locking women's presence into the atrophying terms of social and psychoanalytic theory. They recognize how women's activities are subsumed under "orthodox Marxist categories" but they themselves use those same categories of "reproduction", "socialization", and "consumption" which refer to the myriad of work processes and social relations that women who mother are engaged in⁵. Women's experience is written historically and theoretically to conform with Marxist feminist or Feminist Marxist discursive practice, thus continuing the trend of "a way of seeing that is not seeing"⁶. Is this inescapable or necessary?

What I am conscious of as I attempt to critique the forms of feminist academic debate, is the difficulty of pulling back from those very forms, of inserting 'other' experience to make an/other case. Our limited capacity to express our knowledge of the real cannot exist outside of discourse, and engaging with discourses we do not believe reflect this knowledge causes us to privilege them nonetheless.

Concentrating on the relationship of the active participants to the textually-mediated discourse does seem to offer one way out. I start with an area of textually-mediated discursive practice which has come under much criticism from feminists, early childhood development. To accommodate this body of critique many of the 'bibles' have been rewritten, namely Dr Spock's Baby and Child Care, and women in the field have attempted to write correctives. Though the texts of this discourse are now written for 'parents', implicitly and often explicitly they are directed at women who mother. They represent the how-to of mothering and concentrate on the needs of the child. Women inexperienced in the actual practice of infant care buy and turn to these texts frequently in the early months/years of mothering. Just how frequently is illustrated by the claim on the cover of the 40th edition of Dr Spock's Baby and Child Care: "over 30,000,000 copies sold". More recent 'gurus', such as Penelope Leach and Sheila Kitzinger are equivalent best-sellers.

Again let's look at some introductory paragraphs, this from Penelope Leach's Your Baby and Child:

"Your Baby and Child is written from your baby or child's point of view because, however fashion in child-rearing may shift, that viewpoint is both the most important and the most neglected.....So taking the baby's point of view does not mean

neglecting yours, the parents' (my emphasis) viewpoint. Your interests and his are identical."⁷

There is a lot to question in these few sentences. Firstly, can any book written by an adult, psychologist or not, pretend an infant or a child's standpoint? Secondly, child psychology, if it does represent the child's "point of view" is a far from neglected area. Psychology is one of the most subscribed undergraduate programs in North America (mainly by women?). The print media, from women's magazines to 'respectable' newspapers devote pages to issues of child-rearing and child psychology (The Guardian runs a regular weekly page on the psychologically "healthy/unhealthy" family). Thirdly, how can anyone presume that my standpoint and that of my infant or older child are identical whatever the yardstick?

The most insidious of presumptions is that disguised by the term "parents". The intent behind using a plural neutral term is to avoid a charge of sexism, but it is also a failure to confront an actual and political reality: that women are still primarily and often exclusively responsible for the work of child-rearing in Western society, as in most other societies and cultures. With this attempt at neutrality, Leach thus assumes the nuclear familial circumstances that are

the backbone of Western ideology and, lo and behold, not only is the standpoint of woman who mothers identical to that of her child, it is also identical to that of the father who fathers/mothers, wiping out thirty years of gender politics at a stroke!

This sleight of hand allows Leach to continue blithely on, ignoring the material circumstances of people's lives: who works outside the home, who shops, who cleans, who washes the clothes and the diapers, how far away are the shops, the nearest playground, the doctor's, the bus stop, whether one lives in a one-room apartment or a four-bedroomed house with garden. She also ignores the reasons why people buy such books as hers. Among the many 'reasons', is the lack of actual 'advice' and support of community and extended family as we become increasingly atomized in time and space. Her work 'rises above' such actual and political considerations. The text disguises the social organisation that makes it popular and 'necessary'.

Leach does go on to expand on her use of various pronouns, an area with which she is clearly uneasy. She has no problem with 'you', she explains: "'You' is a bisexual word so writing the book this way has made no English Language (my emphasis) problems.'" (This you that refers to "both

parents" is not reflected in the many photographs and illustrations, where at least 95% of the images of caregiver are female). But she nervously defends her use of 'he' over 'she' when referring to the infant as "it is easier for most parents to accept that pronoun as applying to either sex."

Let us consider Leach's claims from the standpoint of the knower. The book is addressed to me, a me who is a generalized other, but the standpoint is that of my child's. The narrative baby and child is 'he', but my child is female. Therefore, myself and my child's specificity are both outside the texts. Yet, the purpose of the text, couched as advice and help, is to organise my behaviour in relation to my child. By taking the soi-disant 'viewpoint' of the child, the text does not have to engage with my specificity, my circumstances and, heaven forbid, my needs. Ordering the knower's behaviour in this fashion disallows the knower from thinking about her own specificity. If her 'standpoint' is conflated with that of her child's, then the possibility of a critical stance is minimised.

In the broader picture of the discourse which this text forms a part, it is possible to recognize the hidden relations of ruling. Western liberal democracy depends upon the family institution as the fundamental unit of society. The degree to

which this is believed to be true is illustrated by the following quotation:

"It is striking that the widespread disintegration of the concept of the family as the nucleus of society, the increasing instability in family relationships reflected by the spread of cohabitation and divorces, the new position of women in society and their wish to work, the crisis in traditional moral values, the falling birth rate, which is now approaching or even falling below the rate required for the population to renew itself,..... Thus the future and very survival of these societies are at risk."(my emphasis)"

If somewhat extreme, this is a not untypical view of the primacy of the family unit in Western society. The debate about the nature of the family, what constitutes the family and whether the ideologically prevalent notion of the family is actually the prevalent form of familial circumstances has been well-covered elsewhere. What is of concern here is the way discourses such as that of child psychology organize themselves around this popular model.

The body of statements which constitute the discursive practice of child psychology articulate with an ideology that assumes that the best place to raise children is within the nuclear family, and the person best-suited to carry out all the work processes subsumed in the categories 'child-rearing'

and 'socialization' is woman. The textually-mediated discourse of psychology can be seen as a mechanism which both reproduces that ideology and reproduces the gendered work processes that underwrite it. The effectiveness of the discursive form is not measured by how well or how badly its prescriptions are followed, but that the majority (women) follows them at all. That there is, implicit in the texts, a right and a wrong way to raise children is the hook which snares us; if we are loving, caring 'parents', we will want to do it the 'right way' whatever the personal emotional cost.

The language of this discourse is critical as it sets itself up as a discourse of love. The machinations of the authoratative patriarchal discourse are cloaked in the 'manipulative' language of wonderment and emotion. The texts will teach you to love the right way. They appropriate the real emotional moments and experience of birth and childhood and by the use of the imperative voice insist upon their own ways of seeing and doing:

"You, the new mother, have been through a tremendous experience.....(but) Clearing your mind for mothering is vital because your baby needs you. His experience has been far more shattering than yours.....the baby will relax after his traumatic journey..... Put very gently to your bare breast, he may suck, discover a new form of human contact and feel a little less separated.

These are his first contacts with his new world: let him make them without distress. These are his first moments of life; let him have them in peace."¹¹

Note how in the above excerpt the 'he' of the narrative subject ceases to be a mere linguistic convention. The 'he' both exposes and represses the erotic elements embedded here. "You, the new mother" must submit to his needs. It is the appropriation of woman's will to sexually desire. The intense sensuality that women feel towards their newborn, girl or boy, is one of the greatest pleasures of mothering. Texts such as this stand between and mediate this sensuality.

Language that is traditionally associated with the 'feminine' characterizes the discursive form. The texts are liberally splattered with words such as 'loving', 'caring', 'soft', 'gentle', 'tenderness', 'selflessness', all attributes or emotions traditionally more likely to be supplied by women. The texts also frequently mention guilt, usually with injunctions not to feel it. (Why mention it if we aren't supposed to feel it?)

We need to look at what women actually read to understand why we need to take these texts more seriously, perhaps, than the various reformulations of Marxist theory. For the first

few couple of months after my daughter was born, nearly all of my reading was childcare how-to manuals, that was all I had time for. Living at a distance from both sets of grandparents and family so that even a short phone call was a rare and expensive occurrence, my major source of practical advice on mothering came from such books. I did seek and receive advice from paid professionals, my midwife and nurses at the hospital. I did not seek and, probably would not have accepted advice from friends or neighbours. This also might have been true for our families had they been living closer. I chose to prefer the 'advice' of a professional textually-mediated discourse over that of people with whom I had a direct local relationship and who had my interests at heart.

All the interviewees set great store by child care manuals. One of my respondents, Jane, noted that she "bought every baby book I could find." This particular respondent made the distinction between 'advice' and 'information'. She favoured one book, The Compleat Baby and Childcare (author unknown) "a really useful book which didn't treat women as morons", and she told the following story in its support: "It's the middle of the night - this child is throwing up everywhere. I don't know why he's throwing up - hysteria run for the book. I look up all the reasons it might be. It said middle-ear infection and sure enough once I'd read that -

that's what it is. I've got to get him to the doctor. I did. The doctor checked and it was."

It is worth comparing this story to her response to an earlier question: Did people offer you advice? "Not at that point, people were fairly....felt that I knew. I did have a neighbour who was always offering me advice - she thought because she'd had four children she was an expert.(laughter)"

The book, for her, offered 'information', information she could select and have control over. There is no question in her mind that either the book or the doctor could have been wrong, that there might have been professional 'collusion' given that her child was only nine weeks old at the time and a broad spectrum antibiotic can, literally, cure a multitude of ills. Both the book and her doctor were most likely correct but the fact remains that the text organized her behaviour in a particular way at the same time as she saw herself as exercising control over 'information'. In contrast, she denies her neighbour's lived experience of raising four children as being grounds for expertise. The neighbour offers 'advice', not 'information'.

Another 'effect', then, of the textually-mediated discourse of childcare/child psychology is that it and

devalues other sources of 'information'. Perhaps one unintentional tragedy of the postwar explosion of child psychology as textually-mediated discursive practice is the break in sharing experience between generations of women. The discourse mediates the relationship between 'mothers' and their daughters who mothers. Interposing itself between them, it sets the terms on which the experiential will be exchanged.

In one respect, child psychology does not pull any punches. While it forms a part of the discursive practices of mothering its focus is explicitly the 'child'. Psychoanalysis is a much thornier discursive field. I have debated and hesitated including it as an area of discussion, but if this project aims to be an analysis of discursive practices of mothering, such a discussion is unavoidable.

Perhaps as a result of the increasing secularization of Western society, as much as any other reason, psychoanalysis has become one of the central explanatory tools in analysing social relations and behaviour. Psychoanalytic theory has progressively permeated most areas of the social sciences and appears to have been adopted as the 20th century's True discourse. It is not uncommon, for example, for members of philosophy faculties to hold joint appointments with faculties of psychology. Although psychoanalysis has its own training

institutions, the work of the 'father' of psychoanalysis, Freud, underwrites much of the psychological concepts current in the discipline. Psychoanalysis' reification as the new Truth makes any discussion of its limits a daunting task.

Supporters of Freud and Freud himself claimed that his psychoanalytic work developed a new social theory. Bockock writes:

"According to Freud, psychoanalysis was to be the only secure foundation for the future development of the social sciences such as anthropology and sociology."

This claim was based on his work that "took the insights of poets, artists, novelists, and religious mystics into the workings of this aspect of human life and made them into propositions formulated as part of a rational scientific theory of 'the unconscious'." Nietzsche and others, Bockock points out, had already identified the 'unconscious' as the site of essential conflicts: "The great basic activity is unconscious....Our consciousness limps along afterward.Every extension of knowledge arises from making conscious the unconscious" but it was Freud who transformed these insights into a theoretical structure of concepts.

Psychoanalysis, with its concepts of the 'unconscious',

'repression', and 'socialization' is critical to feminist analyses of the causes of women's oppression. With the growing disaffection for historical accounts which suggested a precapitalist, or prefeudal utopia of gender equality, feminist theorists looked to Freudian theory. Freud's work has become a heavily-mined terrain for various strands of feminist study over the past fifteen years. The distinction that Freud made between the biological and the psychic has provided the richest vein for research:

"I object to all of you to the extent that you do not distinguish more clearly and cleanly between what is psychic and what is biological, that you try to establish a neat parallelism between the two.....In addition, I would only like to emphasize that we must keep psychoanalysis separate from biology just as we have kept it separate from anatomy and physiology."¹⁵

In the most controversial of debates, the nature of gender and sexuality, Freud's work provided a route out and between the two positions of biologically essentialist and social constructionist approaches to gender formation and sexuality. Although his work has been used to support both positions, Freud's dedicated disciples have been intent on developing his work to show otherwise. Their work has been directed at deepening our understanding of 'socialization'. Lacan is one of the foremost exponents of psychoanalytic

approaches to 'socialization'. At one and the same time, he has both drawn a lot of fire from feminist ranks and provided feminist research with one of its best tools for understanding the 'mechanics' of women's subordination. Mitchell describes Lacan's work as follows:

"Lacan dedicated himself to reorienting psychoanalysis to its task of deciphering the ways in which the human subject is constructed - how it comes into being - out of the small human animal. It is because of this aim that Lacan offered psychoanalytic theory the new science of linguistics which he developed and altered in relation to the concept of subjectivity. The human animal is born into language and it is always out there in the world outside, lying in wait for the neonate. Language always 'belongs' to another person. The human subject is created from a general law that comes to it from outside itself and through the speech of other people, though this speech in its turn must relate to the general law."¹⁶

The above allows us to think about a process of socialization whereby a person is brought into social being not by active or reactive interplay of particular individuals but by the transfer of "the general law" through speech.

Lacan's work questioned directly the popularist areas of psychology, that we are born into subjectivity i.e. with a "viewpoint". He argued that the interpretations of

psychoanalytic theory found in ego psychology, object-relations theory and Kleinian theory "assume that the subject exists from the beginning"¹⁷. Such interpretations were in his view a way of making psychoanalysis conform to the dominant ideology of humanism. We are born into language, not subjectivity, and that the field of the unconscious exists in relation to language first of all, was a crucial elaboration of Freud. This shift in emphasis was the impetus for the work of structuralists and post-structuralists alike, and the 'feminist poststructuralists' such as Kristeva, Irigaray and Clement and Cixous.

I return to the two major debates critical to feminist theory: biological determinism and social constructionism. These form part of the mothering discourses but are primarily theories of gender and sexuality. The thesis of the first debate is so familiar that it requires little discussion here. Proponents of this theory ascribe sex role differences to biological differences, as put by Edmund Wilson: "Anatomy bears the imprint of the sexual division of labor."¹⁸ Recent feminist theory has ceased to engage with this thesis as much, in my opinion, for the discursive difficulties such engagement presents, as for ideological reasons. Biologistic accounts are usually dispensed with in feminist texts in a few short sentences. For example:

"Biologistic arguments can be challenged on a number of different grounds. In philosophical terms they tend to be reductionist, in that they subsume complex socially and historically constructed phenomena under the simple category of biological difference, and empiricist, in that they assume that differences in social behaviour are caused by the observed differences with which they correlate."¹⁹

The limits of the 'sayable' in feminist discursive practice make any direct engagement with 'biologism' elide into what is judged to be yet another form of biological determinism, a risk too great to take for most feminists.

The social construction of gender, the key response to biologism, shifts ground completely. The foundation for the social constructionist position is psychoanalysis. The two major theorists of this position, Dinnerstein and Chodorow, use Freudian psychoanalysis to explain the reproduction of gender differences and thus the reproduction of mothering, and by implication the reproduction of the patriarchy. Their two positions are summarized here by Sayers and Weedon:

"Dinnerstein argues that, given our present childcare arrangements, in which infants are primarily looked after by women, children permanently side-step the task of working through the persecutory and depressive anxieties

involved in developing a more realistic sense of themselves and of the mother, and involved in recognizing their independence and freedom from her. Children,.....instead retain into adulthood their infantile sense of the mother as 'engulfing' and 'nebulously overwhelming'. Rather than grasping our freedom,.....we avoid the pain this involves by turning from the 'quasi-magical' woman of our infancy to dependence on men who, because they are relatively uninvolved in infant care, are not imbued as women are with the primitive phantasies with which we invested the woman who first mothered us."²⁰

"....Chodorow stresses the importance of 'the fact that women universally are largely responsible for early childcare and for (at least) later female socialization'... 'This points to the central importance of the mother daughter relationship for women, and to a focus on the conscious and unconscious effects of early involvement with a female for children of both sexes. The fact that males and females experience this social environment differently as they grow up accounts for the development of basic sex differences in personality'

"Chodorow argues that mothering involves a woman in a double identification, with her mother and with her child, in which she repeats her own mother-child history. This results in a stronger bond between mother and daughter than between mother and son and a lesser degree of individuation in the case of girls, who consequently develop more

flexible ego boundaries which create the psychological preconditions for the reproduction of women's subordination to men. In contrast, mothers encourage their sons to differentiate themselves from their mother and develop a masculine identity based on their father..."²¹

Chodorow's account, unlike Dinnerstein's, includes an analysis of the constitution of masculinity as well as femininity in relation to 'mother' and 'father'. What the two accounts have in common is the 'cause' of this psychic constitution of gender: our present psychosexual and social constitution as gendered beings is produced by the fact that we are mothered by women who are mothered by women.

This causal explanation -- the social arrangements of mothering -- implies a simple antidote: if we change those social arrangements i.e. if men take a major part in the work subsumed by 'mothering', we can expect an eventual abolition of the sexual division of (all) labour. As Chodorow describes it:

"The elimination of the present organisation of parenting in favour of a system in which both men and women are responsible would be a great social advance ... (this would transform) the social organization of gender ... eliminating sex equality"²²

There are, in my view, several problems with this social constructionist position and its apparently simple palliative, which are central to this discussion. They are serious because this position and its corrective have become a pivotal part of feminist strategies for change.

Lacan's work directs us to a key area of difficulty with the social constructionist proposition, both of which are alluded to in Kristeva's work mentioned in the previous chapter. I believe these areas to be critical to our textually-mediated experience of mothering. The first area concerns what Kristeva has seen as the conflation of two concepts creating an "idealized misconception" of both femininity and 'mother'.

I will start with Rose's critique of Chodorow and work back from there:

"The book attempts to use psychoanalysis to account for the acquisition and reproduction of mothering, but it can only do so by displacing the concepts of the unconscious and bisexuality in favour of a notion of gender imprinting which is compatible with a sociological conception of role. Thus the problem needing to be addressed - the acquisition of sexual identity and its difficulty - is sidestepped in the account. The book sets itself to question sexual roles, but only within the limits of an assumed identity."²³

According to Lacan our identity as a subject as far as it exists at all is a "mirage ... When the human baby learns to say 'me' or 'I' it is only acquiring these designations from someone and somewhere else, from the world which perceives and names it."²⁴ Our unconscious 'knowledge' of the uncertainty and instability of our identity is recoverable in dreams where the 'I' is someone else.

Our identity as subject is imposed on us by the "necessary divisions of language"²⁵. At the unconscious level we know we are lost to ourselves by our existence in language. This awareness of loss, as I understand it, is also the root of our sexual desire and thus our sexuality. Radically separated from our subjectivity, we replay this separation with the object (e.g. infants throwing toys out of view and immediately crying for their return). We only know the object as object when it is lost to us, i.e. negatively. Sexual desire and sexuality are dissatisfaction which are represented by Freud's Oedipal castration complex - the metaphor for "insoluble desire"²⁶. Further, it is a must of our presence in language to take up a position in language as she or he, man or woman. "Such a position is by no means identical to with one's sexual characteristics, nor is it a position of which one can be very confident."²⁷ Our gendered identity exists primarily in language itself and the gendered

identity of those who bring us into language, of those who socialize us, in the generally understood sense is of secondary significance. Secondary significance in the three key areas relevant to both feminist discursive practice and the discursive practices of mothering; sexuality, subjectivity and the reproduction of mothering.

Perhaps as a consequence of the inherent difficulty with grappling with our "insoluble desire", feminist psychoanalysis chose to shift the metaphor away from repression of the phallus, concentrating on the notion of a pre-Oedipal phallic mother, equally repressed. Lacan noted:

"Taking the experience of psychoanalysis in its development over sixty years, it comes as no surprise to note that, whereas the first outcome of its origins was a conception of the castration complex based on paternal repression, it has progressively directed its interests towards the frustrations coming from the mother, not that such a distortion has shed any light on the matter."²⁸

There is little point, according to Lacan, in tinkering with the metaphors that represent our struggles with our sexual identity. Our precarious subjectivity in language is inseparable from an equally precarious sexual identity rooted in the unconscious field. Changing the social arrangements of mothering would have benefits deeply and widely felt, but to

claim that it is capable of restructuring our psyches and thereby redefining our sexual roles is both to ignore what psychoanalysis can tell us about our sexual identity and ignore the pre-existent psychic and mythic structures embedded in the language into which we are born. Chodorow, with the best of intentions, appears to fall into the category of feminist research that Kristeva sees as demanding "a new representation of femininity" but continues to "identify motherhood with that idealized misconception" and in an attempt to reject "the image and its misuse....circumvents the real experience that fantasy overshadows." Unwittingly, Chodorow's "idealized misconception" is the pre-Oedipal phallic mother and this "fantasy", "an omnipotent mother" figure, causes untold harm to both male and female children.

So Chodorow's work, for all its strengths, circumvents most of the real experience of mothering and denigrates the work of mothering if it is done by women. By implication, Chodorow tends to see women who mother as psychically dangerous. From the standpoint of a woman who mothers, particularly those who do not have the advantage of choice over who undertakes primary child care, Chodorow suggests a no-win situation.

My stated reluctance to engage with psychoanalytic

discourse comes from my contradictory feelings about its limits and its strengths. Clearly, I do believe that psychoanalysis in its therapeutic and its textually discursive forms is capable of exposing aspects of our psyche and our culture which would otherwise remain hidden from 'view'. Its influence on sociology, on political theory and on feminist thinking and practice is what makes this thesis possible. My ambivalence may well be summed up in the 'Freudian slip' I made in writing the first sentence of this paragraph when I wrote; 'psychoanalytic discourse ... his limits'. Despite all the rewriting and reinterpreting of Freud's work, despite shifts of focus away from Father to Mother, it comes to me as the law of the Father, that from which I feel 'governed' and excluded. That psychoanalysis merely describes a process to language where the phallus and the Father represent alienation from self and desire does not alter the fact that they now do represent it and I live daily with these representations.

This problematic is exemplified by the fierce debates between the feminist and psychoanalytic discourses, as much in the form as the content of these debates. Insisting upon our discursive space as 'daughter' (all that is available to us?) we go into battle with the 'father', privileging our 'special' relationship with the Law [the Father] over our material experience. The struggle between the patriarchal discourse

and feminism is, according to Iriqaray and Gallop, 'reducible' to these psychoanalytic constructs. Feminism choosing the ambiguous route of sexual resistance" to overthrow the patriarchal order.

The argument against the 'feminist' will to power is the dichotomous nature of the Law: the Father [the law] legislates against His seduction of the daughter:

"The father's law is a counterphobic mechanism. He must protect himself from his desire for the daughter. ... It is so necessary to deny his attraction for the little girl that Freud denies her existence: 'We must admit that the little girl is a little man.' If the father were to desire his daughter he could no longer exchange her, no longer possess her in the economy... So the law of the father protects him and patriarchy from the potential havoc of the daughter's desirability."

If this interpretation of the libidinous economy", is legitimate, then the 'daughter' is endowed with a token phallus, a seductive 'tool' for battling the patriarchy. But this discursive space limits and divides us because it is not available to us as 'mothers'. Where are we when we become 'mother', stripped of our token status but desirous to retain our questionable privileges? The potential for continuing to despise that which we have become is great indeed. The

consolation prize for being non-existent 'daughter' was a 'little man' discursive space. No such consolation prize for 'mother'.

"I have no mother," Christ says to Mary. The Judeo-Christian Mother is removed to the symbolic stratosphere. Disembodied and desexed [so as not to put into question or at risk the Name of the Father], the Virgin is transformed into the feminine ideal, the "inaccessible goal"³⁴. Women in the West are apparently less willing, less able to accept the idealized and non-existent maternal space and to relinquish the subjectivity of 'daughter', which gained them conditional acceptance into the public domain.

To argue that women have delayed having children until their mid to late thirties in order to establish a career is, I believe, a simplistic explanation of an increasingly common phenomenon. Kristeva writes:

"one is led to ask the following: what are the aspects of the feminine psyche for which that representation of motherhood does not provide a solution or else provides one that is felt to be coercive by twentieth century women?"³⁴

At the beginning of this chapter, I recounted the occasion when I was asked to speak about my experience of mothering in

the context of the textually-mediated discourse of psychoanalysis. I could not speak to the discourse, for as much as 'I' as mother was present in the discourse as fantasy and archetype, the central participants are infants/children, and one could only speak to the discourse from that already precarious subjectivity.

Among the reasons I chose not to sidestep psychoanalytic discourses of mothering was the refreshing work of Rossiter. Although, Rossiter's 'methodology' was, of necessity, briefly discussed in the the introduction, it is important to consider her work in the light of social constructionist theorists such as Chodorow whose work relies heavily on psychoanalytic theory. Rossiter, in thinking about accounts of mothering, prefers her lived-in actual and emotional experience of mothering as the yardstick by which such accounts may be judged. Frequently lacking that same courage in my own account, I quote extensively:

"While this explanation (Chodorow's 'social construction') eliminates the biologicistic basis for preferential attachment, it doesn't deal with claims regarding the effects of children's special and intense vulnerability to women. After all, I had a one-year old son who loved me better than anyone else; according to social constructionists, he would have to stop this in order to grow up to be a man. I had a three-year-old daughter who also

loved me more than anyone else; for her, being in an intense relationship with me was socially permitted.

"I was stuck on the horns of a very painful dilemma: I believed that children's attachment to their mothers was based on their physical relationship to the maternal body; yet I understood that same attachment to be implicated in the maintenance of the patriarchy.

"What made this dilemma so painful was that it precluded feminist action. If I worked toward the goals suggested by biologicistic explanations, I was making sole-caretaking by women more tolerable, and thus working in service of the psychological underpinning of patriarchy. On the other hand if I opted for equal parenting, I denied my body and my baby.

"Trying to make sense of all this in the real world, I ended up in ridiculously painful situations: for instance, while my husband was giving an objecting baby a bottle, I would be expressing milk from an overly full breast into the sink. In my guts, I felt that the fact of uterus and breasts precluded equal attachment - at least in infancy."⁵

She is able to 'see' the limits of discursively-produced practice in relation to her materially-produced experience of mothering. Compare this with my earlier attempts to describe the limits of social constructionist theory within its own frame of psychoanalytic reference, where lived-in experience

and conflict are not decipherable. Rossiter's standpoint resonates and speaks to me as mother.

Rossiter's text represented the only truly materialist account of mothering that I have encountered to date. This is not to minimize the influence and the value of texts such as Rich's Of Woman Born, but as pioneering works they tend to state the 'problem' of mothering as the site of women's most felt oppression without offering us, as women who mother, satisfactory alternative ways of thinking about the way that oppression operates. I believe Rossiter work does just that.

Rossiter's analysis offers some of the most valuable suggestions for rethinking and refusing the category 'Woman' in our social arrangements of mothering. These suggestions are premised on women recognizing the discursive lynchpins whereby the alienation, the Othering, the devaluation is most effectively transmitted, absorbed and reproduced. Recognizing that the category of Woman is constructed in and through the body of woman is a critical first step for Rossiter. In Linda's and Anne's narratives, we see how obstetric discursive practice objectifies their bodies and excludes them from the discourse. They experience disappointment with their bodies and impotence in reclaiming their bodily experience as their own. In Nina's account, the delight and pleasure in her body

during pregnancy and birth is later blighted by her body 'failing' to conform to standards of desirability.

Rossiter suggests the invention of a discursive practice of celebration. Currently, she argues, woman has no precedents for describing and writing the empowering experience of her body at birth. A new discourse which celebrates woman's bodily strength and capacity would counter and dislocate the prevailing discourses of the female body as commodified object of desire.

Her second suggestion, one that has long been subject to discussion and included as a fundamental strategy for change, is to refuse the identification of woman as caretaker, or rather resist "the material, historical, and discursive factors which make sole caretaking the only possibility for women with children in our culture."⁶ Children's exclusion, both materially and discursively, from the public sphere structures a form of caring for children which isolates the caretaker, and thus makes the work of 'mothering' invisible. Again, new discursive practice which insists on the presence of that work and the 'direct' beneficiaries of that work -- children -- in the public sphere would open possibilities for new arrangements of caretaking\mothering which would not automatically exclude women who mother from

public\professional world, and thus make the work of caretaking more attractive to those who currently do the least: men.

These practical suggestions, without being particularly novel, are introduced and discussed in the context of women's material experience. They are set against actual instances of women's subordination in her daily work of mothering. This paralleling of the women's everyday world and the interventions of patriarchal power in its multiplicity of discursive practices make 'subversive' and contradictory discursive practice a central component of strategies for change. If women are producing new knowledge about themselves, the need for it to be reinforced in the textual world is paramount.

I do, however, question Rossiter on her exclusions and on her insistence of a universal and ahistorical preferential 'mother-infant' attachment of the first year of life. It may be our constructed desire and one which we 'desire' to satisfy, but there is good evidence to suggest that for extended periods of our history, both upper-class and the middle-class women showed "an apparent lack of interest in the newborn baby."⁷ Her assumption sees the attachment to the maternal body as indicted only by feminism and social

constructionist theory. This attachment is no more absolute than any other aspect of the discursive practices of mothering.

It is perhaps due to Rossiter's commitment to this preferential attachment that, beyond a summary mention, she circumvents psychoanalytic theory. Psychoanalysis insists that the knower works with familial archetypes: father, mother, daughter, son. Unhappy as we might be with the metaphors and analogies that this view imposes, we are bound to consider the relational nature of subjectivity and oppression. We are Daughter, we are Mother, we are in relation to the Father whatever our real familial circumstances were/are. My concern about the absence of the psychoanalytic in Rossiter's account is not that it obscures the real, the material experiences of mothering, but it allows her not to question her familial arrangements and that of her interviewees. She does not question the fundamental economic unit of patriarchal capitalism, the nuclear family, nor the heterosexist imperialism of the concept construction 'family'.

It is also true, however, that my discussion does not engage with the 'familiar', familial discourses. Partly, this is due to the 'family' being well-trodden ground - a stomping ground for all comers in the political arena and still fertile

ground for nearly all the social sciences - but it is yet another category into which the work, the emotions and localised experience of women who mother is absorbed. One of the most effective strategies for changing present social arrangements of mothering must involve confronting the prevailing ideology of the nuclear family which discriminates against women who mother outside of that idealized model. Nevertheless, I do not believe this can be done without more attention being given to the extent to which women are controlled and silenced by the discourses which bear on mothering of which that of the family, albeit the most critical, is only one.

1. Smith D, The Everyday World as Problematic A Feminist Sociology; University of Toronto Press, 1987; p.122

2. Benhabib S. and Cornell D. (eds); Feminism as Critique; University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis; 1987; p.1

3. Ibid, p.2

4. Stanley L. and Wise C.; Breaking Out, Feminist Consciousness and Feminist Research; Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1983; p.13

5. Benhabib and Cornell, op cit., p.2

6. Oakley A.; Sociology of Housework; Martin Robertson, London, 1974; p.27

A. 7. Leach P.; Your Baby and Child, From Birth to Age Five; Knopf, 1986; p.20

8. Ibid, p.24

9.Ibid. p.24

10.Barrett M. and McIntosh M., The Anti-Social Family; Verso. 1982; Quote from M.L. Cassanmagnago Cerretti, EEC MP, p.11

11.Leach P., op cit; p.28

12.Bocock R., Sigmund Freud, Ellis Horwood Ltd./Tavistock Publications, London & New York, 1983; p.15

13.Ibid, p.16

14.Ibid, p.17

15.Mitchell J. and Rose J. (trans.); Feminine Sexuality, Jacques Lacan and the Ecole Freudienne; W.W.Norton & Co.; New York & London, 1985; p.1 Letter from Freud to Karl Muller-Braunschweig, 1935.

16.Ibid, p.5

17.Ibid, p.4

18.Jaggar A. and Rothenberg P., Feminist Frameworks, Alternative Theoretical Accounts of the Relations Between Women and Men; McGraw Hill Book Company, 1984; p.101

19.Barrett M., Women's Oppression Today; Verso, 1980; p.12

20.Sayers J., Sexual Contradictions, Psychology, Psychoanalysis and Feminism; Tavistock Publications, London & New York, 1986; p.57

21.Weedon C., op cit., p.58

22.Chodorow N., The Reproduction of Mothering, Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender; University of California Press, Berkeley, 1978; p.219

23.Rose J., op cit, p.37

24.Ibid, p.5

25.Ibid, p.5

26.Ibid, p.7

27.Ibid, p.6

28.Ibid, p.87

29.Chodorow N. op cit., p.121

30.Gallop argues in The Daughter's of Seduction [Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1982] that feminism tends to desire a reversal of the Law of the Father i.e. it would wish to work within the same parameters of psychosexual power rather than dislocating and thus overthrowing the patriarchy. Working within those parameters rigidifies 'false' subjectivities which depend upon heterosexual rather than polymorphous subject constructions.

31.Ibid. p.76.

32.The term 'libidinous economy' exists both in psychoanalytic and anthropological discourses. In the latter it refers to the exchange of women in the market place as property of father or brother and has been transformed, now, into the commodification and thus the objectification of the female body. Reich's work develops the connection between repressed libidinous drives and the capitalist economic principle.

33.Kristeva J. op cit. p.181

34.Ibid. p.182

35.Rossiter A., op cit, p.13

36.Ibid. p.278

37.Badinter E. Maternal Indifference French Feminist Thought ed. Toril Moi [Basil Blackwell Ltd. 1987] p.150 Badinter looks at the child rearing practices of french women in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries, noting selective mothering practices and the common practice among wealthy and middle-class women to send their second and third children away at birth until they were four or five years old.

CONCLUSION

When I embarked on this project I imagined that despite the complexity of the discursive field that embraces mothering practices, there was a simplicity to my purpose. I believed and still do believe that the relationship -- the dialectic tension -- between the textually-mediated discursive field of mothering and the material practices which they organise and underwrite can only be exposed through concentrating on the latter. But such an approach does have its limits. Some of those limits have been hinted at in earlier chapters. Even as we produce new knowledge and add to the textually-mediated discourse, we work within the confines of the sayable and the knowable imposed by the limits of our consciousness, our language and our history.

We are not capable of sloughing off the mythic structures of our language and culture merely by understanding the present political and social imperatives of our society. Even with the comparative annihilation of time, space and history which our current modes of communication suggest, we all tend to live within discursive fields which are already anachronistic. Never more so than the images of family life

that come to us through the visual media, in advertisements, for example, where children run through Elysian fields towards women (mothers!) holding steaming hot mugs of Cocoa. Whose childhood was that and when?

Nostalgia for the lost territory of 'primary narcissism', it could be argued, prepares us to accept versions of mothering which are appropriate, (as much as they ever were) to other historical moments. Anne said, "I thought it (a child) would make everything nice and cosy." When did a child make things nice and cosy, and for whom? The refracted view of mothering that we are allowed before and after we mother, is fed through the prisms of our own psychic childhood, the socially organised/ing discursive practices, and the language in which they are embedded.

We can see how powerful are the discursive practices which act upon us if we choose, or have no choice but to accept, the social arrangements of mothering, where the primary responsibility of an infant or child devolves upon us. We are Womaned, as Rossiter has characterised it. Accepting the work and the working conditions of mothering produces a knowledge about woman as being best suited to put up with 'deprivations', which are axiomatic with such work: isolation, loneliness, dependence, loss of social,

intellectual and professional confidence, agoraphobia, to name but a few. So entrenched is this knowledge that it co-exists in the same body as the standpoint which argues for a re-evaluation of the work of mothering: that if we choose to use the category 'reproduction', it should displace 'production' as the most significant process with which society is engaged.

We are torn between competing sets of knowledge, competing bodies of desire. Our interests, our standpoints, and our politics will inevitably be compromised in the process of moving one's child to discursive competency within the patriarchal 'linguistic' order.

"Silence weighs heavily none the less on the corporeal and psychological suffering of childbirth and especially the self-sacrifice involved in becoming anonymous in order to pass on the social norm, which one must include the child in order to educate it along the chain of generations."

This ultimate guaranteeing of society Kristeva characterises as "feminine perversity"². Have we come any closer to rejecting it? If not, why not?

Note how Kristeva in the above paragraph uses only the pronoun 'one'. Is this merely to avoid sliding into the minefield of subject/subjectivity? Her 'one' and my 'we' are middle-class, invariably white, Western women and the "social

norm" to be passed on is class and race specific. Our desires and aspirations, conscious or not, for ourselves and for our children, although they may be discursively produced and organised, are concretely middle-class. We wish to guarantee, not society in general, but a particular and privileged place for our children within that society - a fact that both Kristeva and Rossiter conveniently ignore.

In the context of India and Africa, we cannot take for granted the material nature of that privileged place. The best education and health care that money can buy are not paid for out of our own pockets, they are the spoils of a system of global capitalism. Likewise the 'quality parenting' touted in the press is possible only because of surplus, be that time, space, or access to an apparent infinity of educational and entertainment resources, which is extracted from the labour of those who have least. A materialist account of the social arrangements of mothering is, thus, incomplete without a class analysis.

Inevitably any discussion of class draws us inexorably back to the basic economic unit of Western society: the family, the place where most women's class position is determined, be that via their fathers' or their husbands' work or class position. The family is the site of women's material

and discursively-produced oppression. Women's social arrangements of mothering are largely determined by their familial class position and the pressures exerted by the discourses of the idealized middle-class family. As the 'normative' institution for rearing children, this familial model underwrites most social policy concerning both women who mother and children, despite the fact that an increasing number of women and children do not live within such familial circumstances.

While I restate, seemingly ad nauseam, that the issues of the 'family' and the discursive practices which constitute it as the best and safest place for the caretaking of children are not central to this discussion, the narratives of Jane, Anne, Linda and Nina are inextricably bound to the fact of their 'middle-classness' and/or their family circumstances. Particularly in the case of Anne and Linda, their sense of deprivation and exclusion in their mothering work appeared inseparable from their class-determined material circumstances. However and importantly, if women who mother are not completely silenced and can speak their oppression, it necessarily cannot be neatly discursively-organised around questions and categories of class or the 'family'.

Before even beginning to address the mega-issues of class

and the 'family', we need to speak the experience of our everyday/night lives, of our oppression and our repression in its thousands of minute instances such as Anne's "waking up in the morning and dreading how I was going to get through the next ten hours,". We need to produce new knowledge about our social arrangements of mothering and insert it into the existing discourses of mothering. First and foremost we need to refuse to be Womaned; to refuse a social and psychic construction that denies us as "embodied, desiring, concrete and differentiated being(s)".

We can be deluded and delude ourselves into believing that the self or forms of self are congruent with the discursive space available to us. The narratives of Jane, Anne, Linda and Nina show us how the myth breaks down at the point of becoming 'mother'. This is experienced as a loss, a loss of social, emotional and professional confidence and control accompanied by feelings of terror and anxiety. Flax writes:

"Who among us openly discusses the rage and murderous impulses of motherhood - or its erotic pleasures? Where is the analysis of the possible race, class, and homophobic biases of the predominant image of the "good enough" mother, or the conflating of this "fantasy mother" and the "good enough" woman?"

Only if we begin to talk about the former can we start

thinking about the latter. Only if and when we can find a voice for our confusion about who and what we are and what we do and what we feel can we hope to become 'embodied, desiring, concrete and differentiated beings'. For otherwise "what history will our daughters have if we do not find ways to speak and to practice remembering?"⁵

1.Kristeva J. Ibid. p.183

2.Ibid.

3.Flax J. Re-membering the Selves: Is the Repressed Gendered? Michigan Quarterly Review Winter 1987, Vol.XXVI, No.1, Issue on Women and Memory, p.104

4.Ibid. p.99

5.Ibid. p.107

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ALLEN RABUZZI K. Motherself: A Mythic Analysis of Motherhood
[Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis,
1988]
- BARRETT M. Women's Oppression Today Problems in Marxist
Feminist Analysis. [Verso 1980]
- BARRETT M. & MCINTOSH M. The Anti-social Family [Verso, 1982]
- BENHABIB S. CORNELL D. (eds.) Feminism as Critique [University
of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1987]
- BOCOCK R. Sigmund Freud Key Sociologists Series ed.
Hamilton P [Ellis Horwood Ltd, Chichester, Tavistock
Publications, London, New York, 1983]
- BOURDIEU P. Outline of a Theory of Practice Trans. Nice R.
[Cambridge University Press, 1977] [Librairie Doz, 1972]
- BRONER E.M. Her Mothers [Indiana University Press,
Bloomington, 1975]
- BROWNMILLER S. Femininity [Fawcett Columbine, New York, 1984]
- CHODOROW N. The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and
the Sociology of Gender [University of California Press,
Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1978]
- CIXOUS H. & CLEMENT C. The Newly Born Woman Trans. Wing B.
Series: Theory and History of Literature, Vol. 24
[University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1986] [Pub.
La Jeune Nee, 1975]
- CULLER J. The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature,
Deconstruction [Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New
York, 1981]
- DE LAURETIS T. Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film.
and Fiction [Indiana University Press, Bloomington and
Indianapolis, 1987]

- DELPHY C. Close to Home: A Materialist Analysis of Women's Oppression Trans. and ed. Leonard D. [The University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, 1984]
- FARGANIS S. The Social Reconstruction of the Feminine Character [Rowman and Littlefield, 1986]
- FLAX J. Re-membering the Selves: Is the Repressed Gendered? Michigan Quarterly Review Winter 1987, Vol. XXVI, No.1, Issue on Women and Memory, p.104
- FOUCAULT M. The History of Sexuality Trans. Hurley R. [Penguin Books, 1984]
- FRIDAY N. My Mother My Self [Dell Publishing Co., 1978, 1987]
- GALLOP J. The Daughter's Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis [Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1982]
- GREER G. Sex and Destiny: The Politics of Human Fertility [Picador (in assoc. with Secker and Warburg) 1984]
- HENRIQUES J., HOLLOWAY W., URWIN C., VENN C., WALKERDINE V., Changing the Subject: Psychology, social regulation and subjectivity [Methuen, London and New York, 1984]
- IRIGARAY L. Speculum of the Other Woman Trans. Gill G.C. [Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1985] [1st pub. 1974]
- JAGGER A.M., ROTHENBERG P.S. Feminist Frameworks [McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1984]
- LACAN J. and the Ecole Freudienne. Feminine Sexuality eds. Mitchell J. and Rose J. trans. Rose J. [W.W. Norton and Co., 1985]
- LASCH C. The Culture of Narcissism [W.W. Norton New York, London, 1979]
- _____ The Minimal Self [W.W. Norton New York, London, 1984]
- LEACH P. Your Baby and Child: From Birth to Age Five [Alfred A. Knopf New York, 1986]
- MARTIN E. The Woman in the Body: A Cultural Analysis of

- Reproduction [Beacon Press, Boston, 1987]
- MOI T. Ed. French Feminist Thought: A Reader [Basil Blackwell 1987]
- _____. Ed. The Kristeva Reader [Basil Blackwell 1986]
- _____. Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory [Methuen, London and New York, 1985]
- MITCHELL J., OAKLEY A. Eds. The Rights and Wrongs of Women [Penguin Books, 1976]
- NELSON GARNER S., KAHANE C., SPRENGNETH M. Eds. The (M)other Tongue: Essays in Feminist Psychoanalytic Interpretation [Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1985]
- O'BRIEN M. The Politics of Reproduction [Routledge & Kegan Paul, London and New York, 1981]
- OLIN HILL A. Mother Tongue, Father Time: A Decade of Linguistic Revolt [Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1986]
- PALMER G. The Politics of Breastfeeding [Pandora, London, Sydney, Wellington, 1988]
- RICH A. Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution [W.W.Norton New York and London, 1976, 1986]
- RILEY D. Am I That Name? Feminism and the Category of 'Women' in History [University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1988]
- ROSSITER A. From Private to Public: A feminist Exploration of Early Mothering [The Women's Press, 1988]
- SAYERS J. Sexual Contradictions: Psychology, psychoanalysis, and Feminism [Tavistock Publications, London and New York, 1986]
- SICHTERMAN B. Femininity The Politics of the Personal Trans. Whitlam J. Ed. Geyer-Ryan H. [University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1986]
- SMITH D. Femininity as Discourse [Unpublished paper, 1987]
- _____. The Everyday World as Problematic A Feminist Sociology [University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1987]

- ? [Unpublished book 1989]
- STANLEY L., WISE S. Breaking Out: Feminist consciousness and feminist research [Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, Boston, Melbourne and Henley, 1983]
- WEEDON C. Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory [Basil Blackwell, 1987]

END

2/5 0/5 193

FIN