THE OVER-EYE

Laura Edbrook

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Abstract

At age twenty-three, novelist Doris Lessing (1919-2013) sat on the lawn under a toona ciliata tree and explained to her two children why she was leaving Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) for London. This is the biography of the malevolent mother as remembered by the Over-Eye. What is relevant to surveillance and statecraft is extracted and magnified, the rest discarded.

The Over-Eye's indignant disapproval is a psychosocial weapon in marshalling adherence to the home plot. Witness to Lessing's story, this article considers the intersections of maternity, capitalism and psychoanalysis, and situates the matrescene as part of a collective memoir and critical historiography. Narrative passage and personal essay acknowledges intertextual and reparative reading, alongside the interrelationship of the personal and the public, as essential to interpretative critique and positive legislative political action.

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Keywords

Reproductive Labour, Matrescene, Motherhood, Reparative Criticism, Neoliberalism, Capitalism, Doris Lessing, Freedom, Writer's Life, Autotheory

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Biography

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The Over-Eye

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When was it that Doris Lessing is said to have arrived in London with her third child and a novel? Her treasure of words in their thousands naming her a wayward mother. And the tedium of this observation shaming her, again. Again, she would close her eyes for a fraction of a second longer than it was required to blink,[1] draw breath deep into her gut and wish for the amnesia of the mother sugars.[2]

An enduring image captures this woman, a defiant heroine with gumption, standing on a beach where sea-spray felts her hair and the tide tugs at her reticence. A shallow echo disturbs both ears; a far sea, the wind, thick, the sand, a palimpsest. A woman so vigorously dissatisfied that she is on hand for the transverse waves of Western post-war reformation and socialist salvation. An idealistic crusader with the expectation that from revolutionary dereliction we might triumphantly shape a utopia, however selfishly we might need to act.

At nineteen she shared the aftershock of labour with a woman who turned her third born son away. At nineteen her lips thinned and stiffened as war drums vibrated. At twenty-three she sat on a blanket on the lawn under a toona ciliata tree and explained to her

[1] Diski, J. (2015, July 29). Why can't people just be sensible. Retrieved April 30, 2020, from London Review of Books website: https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v37/n15/jenny-diski/why-can-t-people-just-be-sensible
Jenny Diski remembered her late adolescence spent living in Doris Lessing's home in her memoir *In Gratitude* published in 2016. Prior to this she writes on the same topic in a number of essays published in the wake of Lessing's death in 2013.

[2] Lessing, D. (1993). *The Golden Notebook*. London: Paladin.
'Mother Sugar' is the disparaging nickname the protagonist Anna Wulf gives her psychoanalyst Mrs Marks in *The Golden Notebook.*

two children why she was leaving. In 1949, she heaved Peter, aged two and a half, onto the side of the tall ship and said, *look, there's London*. A trunkful of books, including one of her own, some clothes, and her little boy who was too young to leave behind.

In 1950, she lay with a man who woke from nightmares, the war had taken his family and collapsed the foundations of his (and everyone else's) world. With him she officially joined the Communist Party. Despite her doubts, it was a home, a future, a moral force. Her faith endured (like that of many others) by way of willful delusion, of seeing and hearing what *needs* to be true and being blind to what horribly is, a bid to hang on to what you know you cannot live without. And then letting it go. In '56, withdrawing from the Party, she signed a letter to expose the crimes of the Soviet Union and the grave culmination of years of distorted facts. She who was only *then* awash with daylight. She unclosed her eyes in admission of colossal, sickening error and defeat. In '57, after fifteen years of monitoring, an MI5 secret document described her as 'an attractive, forceful, dangerous woman, ruthless if need be.'[3] On waking on her fiftieth birthday she parted her hair at the centre and secured it in a bun at the nape of her neck where it was to slowly transition to silver grey.

What is possibly relevant can be quickly extracted and magnified, and the rest discarded. There is no doubt that fiction makes a better job of the truth[4] and there is no end to the things dug out of the earth.

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[3] Norton-Taylor, R. (2015, August 20). *MI5 Spied On Doris Lessing For 20 Years, Declassified Documents Reveal*. Retrieved April 30, 2020, from The Guardian website: https://www.google.co.uk/amp/s/amp.theguardian.com/books/2015/aug/21/mi5-spied-on-doris-lessing-for-20-years-declassified-documents-reveal

[4] Lessing, D. (2013). *Under My Skin*. HarperCollins UK. p. 314.

Returning after the First World War to a pale, damp, conventional England, Lessing's father chose to follow the promise of maize and corncobs under the slogan *make your fortune in five years*. A farmer in the golden veld of Rhodesia and a diviner with a hammer to hand, the grass truly singing.[5] For twenty-four years, Lessing dutifully followed a provincial mantra, she married at eighteen and afternoon tea-partied with expatriate wives until the malcontent trill rose to unbearable velocity, *if you don't stand firm now, it will be the end of you. And the end of Peter too.*[6]

Very bright, dark, loud, oversized, every person, building, bus, street, striking. The guns fell quiet. War instead was to be cold, silent and remote. In '49, and now the end of the Second World War, the craved opportunity of movement was possible, and so, not quite thirty and in pursuit of the English,[7] Lessing returned to the London she had longed for since leaving with her family in 1925. Still suffering the rigours of rationing, this assailed London was subject to dark fogs and deep austerity. Twice war-damaged, unpainted, stained, cracked, weary, dismal, largely in ruins, but for Lessing the beginning of life, of alternative models to live by, a clean slate, a new page. Living fully meant living freely. Doris Wisdom had left her two children and Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) to fight social division, subject fragmentation and cultural incarceration. Undoubtedly, war has no beginning or end.

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[5] Lessing, D. (1973). *The Grass is Singing*. London: Heinemann.
The manuscript that Doris Lessing arrived in London with was published under the title *The Grass is Singing*.

[6] Words of Mrs Sussman, Doris Lessing's therapist, recounted in *Roads of London.*
Lessing, D. (1997) *The Roads of London*. Retrieved May 3, 2020, from Granta website: https://granta.com/the-roads-of-london/

[7] Lessing, D. (2012). *In Pursuit of the English*. HarperCollins UK.

Like shapes carved out of rock and mountain, the mother sugars' Over-Eye casts moralism as a diagnosis. Nemesis' forceful gaze orders the world in a thundercrack of judgement, recalling eternal figures for the project of demonisation and classification. Those ancient demands of fealty and family; Electra, Antigone, Medea—rehashed specimens of maternal deviance. These 'natural' domestic subjectivities mask the social, historical and economic forces constituting the conditions of human capital—a majestic geology of the malevolent mother from ancient layers of common experience. Where is maternity *after* nature?

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At 4am, the child is made of glass and rocks. In a whole wide vacuum of dawn, the night keeps going, going into the day, it pervades the light. At 4am, I think of historical accounts of sleep, centuries ago, being separated into two parts; part one commencing upon going to bed, and the second instalment before waking in the morning, an interval of an hour or so, known as the 'watch'. Awake, I listen for moth-breath, in and out, and lightly broken by a burble, a wheezy exhale or a snore, and wonder if this wakeful watch feels as lonely as motherhood at dawn. At 4am, a new time discipline is imposed. Warm milk coats the mouth and tongue, a small bear transmits white noise and thick blue tedium scores a new attention to the world. At 4am, the body is unfamiliar and restless with timeless twilight obscurity, the baby cries into an impotent dream where, under 15-tog oblivion, we share the night with all invisible nightwakers across deep time and space. Night gets thick and darkness gets heavy and we learn to obey the mother sugars and the diktat of the flawless mothership.

It is a matter of months, a year at most, when the night is at its thickest. Stiffened by soaring cortisol, cloaked by dim light and the heating kept on through the night. A thickness warmed with serrated edges. The darkness remembers the radiant mother, she remembers the eyes, the hands, the cloistering silence, the watchfulness, the *watched*ness, the textures and agonies of postpartum life, coiled around one single being. A tiny mouth learns to open wide and nestles in for a good attachment. A skin forms on the top of a glass of warm milk, the body has to break open to give birth but it must not spill out onto the streets.

Mothers always fail. Masqueraded as nature or virtue or essence, their task is to shore up the ruins of all personal and political failings and rescue the world from chaos, to articulate an unconditional sacrificial love, alone, to reconcile time wasted with being wasted by time, to stay silent in grief and to remain morally and aesthetically perfect at all times. Anchored to the earth by a tiny mewling child, mothers are indivisibly implicated in the world's virtue and horror, they are the objects of a very peculiar form of socially licensed cruelty, says Jacqueline Rose.[8] To be a mother, life must be suspended. To be oneself, the baby must be forgotten. To be a writer, the mother is to perform the selfish sacraments of the monster. To succeed at one means to fail, forget, break, abandon the other. So, we fold the monster's umbrella. It is a persistent conservative binary framework and as we begin to lose the legislative battle for two states, violence and war feel ever closer.

[8] Rose, J. (2018). *Mothers: An Essay on Love and Cruelty*. London: Faber & Faber Ltd. p. 2.

There were pavements we would walk a hundred times over. Leaves would choke the back wheels of the pram, autumn's bittersweet display now a pulpy annoyance that I would tease out of the spokes at pace in order to maintain a steady motion and delay the baby's shrill awakening—a deafening, urgent cry that is biochemically alarming. The previously familiar regularity of hours and days and seasons now empty, leaving an undifferentiated mass.

Postpartum is inflicted by a neoliberal perfectionism of mothering and encroached by an industrialised gestational clock. And yet it is a poor timekeeper. In this new fragile and permeable world, the fourth trimester runs both long and short in its resistance to regulation. It exists in mystery and clarity, elation and misery; in gloom the hours are wished away, and with regret they are called back. The hours are made by the desire for them to be remade.

The social position of mother is taken up within a cramped latitude of possibility. Euripides' tragic characterisation of Medea prefigures the sentiment of Adrienne Rich, 'We know too much,' writes Rich, 'at first hand [of] the violence which over centuries we have been told is the way of the world, but which we exist to mitigate and assuage!'[9] Medea is canonised as divisive, a dramatised archetype of a scheming, deviant woman. A mother who murders her two sons in an act that bares both her own and the world's violence. This is the unspeakable: that the gestational soul and tireless nurturer can be mutually savage and murderously take the life given, away. Jacqueline Rose notes that 'war and childbirth are recognised in classical thought as two moments when the fabric

[9] Rich, A. (1995). *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. W. W. Norton & Company. p. 270.

of social order is rent,' she goes on to expand that 'armies and mothers—lynchpins of the social order—are called upon to secure our futures and make a precarious, dangerous world feel safe.'[10]

Medea is condemned for allowing fury to triumph over love for her children, but it is more likely that the intensified ache of mothering drives Medea to murder her two sons. Awash with grief, her rage is full with despair and desire to save her boys from a worse fate promised by the city, to cast a fateful sleep and switch off the agony of a reprehensible world. 'Medea's true crime is to shatter a myth of collective innocence,' concludes Rose, 'it is because Medea assuages nothing that she is indicted of all crimes. […] She is a scapegoat, another mother who is guilty because everyone else has failed.'[11]

It is the feeling of being bitten hard on the neck and carried away to safety; it is the longing for obliteration; it is love that has been turned inside out and gone feral. It is a pain of living that does not lessen but exponentially increases.

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There are, at first, faint tremors of quickening which resolve to a sleepy stretch making ready, then small kicks and hiccups which ripple the ribcage. Then there is

[10] Rose, J. (2018). *Mothers: An Essay on Love and Cruelty*. London: Faber & Faber Ltd. p. 53.
[11] Rose, J. (2018). p. 71.

unmistakable probing, the restless hands and eager feet of the companion buried inside, while outside there is a shattering of autonomy.

Guttural noises come after feeding and syrupy eyes peer to the middle distance, somewhat adoringly, somewhat dolorously. We are together behind the paper curtain, awake at night, hyperaroused and traversing our new beginning. This is the dream state that psychoanalyst and paediatrician D. W. Winnicott in his radical project of sanctioning 'good enough'[12] parenting termed the 'primary maternal preoccupation', more recently described as maternal motivation.[13] Neurological restructuring summoned in pregnancy crescendos in an aureole of sentiment and the oxytocin suffused postpartum matrescene. First defined by anthropologists in acknowledgement of a specific maternal neurobiological transition, the matrescene describes the interior process of becoming a mother, the glom-like intensification of exquisite joy and wonder and a glut of maternal ambivalence. A terrible panic, the panic of confinement.

Human capital—in the form of emotional, physical, and spiritual labour, attention, and above all, personal allegiance—is maintained, and instrumentalised within organisational structures. The maternity ward is muted to the pastel palate of newborn life, a gentle and hypersensitive space for all those brittle beginnings. The assistive technology is feminised in this sickly crèche, an overburdened and consequently

[12] Winnicott, D. W. (1991). *The Child, the Family and the Outside World (Penguin Psychology)*. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books. pp. 173-176.
D. W. Winnicott's radical project of sanctioning 'good enough' parenting, followed observation of babies and their mothers. His report, published in 1953, attempted to support the 'sound instincts' of most parents and caregivers, recording that babies and children benefit when their devoted mothers fail them in manageable ways.
[13] Winnicott, D. W. (2013). *Collected Papers*. Routledge.
Primary maternal preoccupation is Winnicott's object relations theory concerning the state in which the ordinary devoted mother becomes preoccupied with her infant to the exclusion of everything else, permitting a heightened sensitivity to the child's needs.

deficient cradle for all things pre and postnatal. The lights are punishingly bright. The ultrasound navigates viable flesh with buttery peach cursor control—a spherical stick of joy piloted by the midwife to map the ailerons and elevators of pregnancy. The pale green paper curtain enfolds the patient in pleats of their individually felt but collectively known healthcare experience.

The baby was breech and obstinate, determined to remain in the floating, cushioned pool she had been in for the past nine months, and so I was scheduled for a caesarean section, officially classified as 'elective'. In pregnancy the body is marshalled, no longer private, no longer personably knowable. Maternal-infant bonding strictures outline that unless there is skin-to-skin contact within thirty minutes after birth the critical period for the formation of a secure bond expires and optimal emotional development will not occur. A caesarean section deems this immediate touch impossible due to a gaping hole in the mother's abdomen and a network of electrodes on her chest. This necessary medical marshalling is an early introduction to maternal culpability and its controlling emotional assault. In an abrupt transition from uterine to outside world my baby's lungs open and she cries, but already, even in neonatal motherhood, I have failed.

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We are socialised, both structurally and ideologically, to attribute mothering with female biology and to reside women with the enormity of care labour. The single-income—*mother at home and father on the make*—is no longer the norm. The mother now returns a wage while simultaneously performing the absented role of home keeper.

Despite the mass entry of women into the workforce during the 20th century, the phenomenon of the ‘second shift’ still exists with half of the workforce coerced into performing unwaged reproductive labour in addition to waged labour and assimilating that labour as love, as virtue, as grace, as something we must cherish and furthermore, perfect.

In 1916, Rose Laub Coser is named in memory of Rosa Luxemburg. Following escape from Nazi threat and immigration to New York City in 1939, Rose Laub Coser, a committed socialist, published on the effect of social structures on individuals, in particular considering the relationships between human capital and power within the ‘greedy institution’ of the family. Her work pioneered a close reading of the constraints experienced within the family unit by the identified mother. Coser’s analysis tracked the unyielding social expectation of women’s singular loyalty to maintenance of the domestic sphere and supposed unique capacity to care for others. The woman’s service to the institution of motherhood and the home is perpetuated by the depiction of actions freely given and autonomously motivated as a principle. The kind mother, at an automatic disadvantage, embodies political tensions between identities that intersect race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, migration status, the home, the workplace, culture, and community. Following Coser’s thoughts, when women occupy statuses outside of a single institution (the home), even if they are incompatible and contradictory with one another, the resulting segmentation of their attention and time is resistance to the ‘greed’ of the family. The issue of children and who looks after them remains profoundly political and this resonates in the codified rallying cry to *have it all*—to have choice, agency, and multiple loyalties.

The opening claim in Coser's article 'Stay Home, Little Sheba' is that geographical displacements threaten regulated social organisation and contribute to radical social change, significantly a 'relocation of people in social space so that their role relations would become crucially restructured.'[14] The success of the greedy institution of society and family, as described by Coser, is held in the assurance of confinement and predictability, an unyielding persistence of the social matrescene and commitment to norms. Her article, written in 1975, vigorously argues that the refusal (by President Richard Nixon, in U.S. office 1969-74) of any serious childcare policies strategically impose women's low professional status thus reinforcing the maintenance of the carceral stratification system. Controlled rootedness and observable accountability—capital's reliance on individualism, on mothering in isolation, on the mother as biologically defined, presides over a more communal way of life, of mothering as a social practice.

The mother gets smaller, she disappears, and motherhood remains a political division.

By the time we find this out, we might be haemorrhaging on the hospital floor, doubled with pain as the incision at the navel severs from tripping backwards, dismantled from cluster feeding for several hours. It is love but it is a love that undoes you, a love where you *submit to falling forever*,[15] and failing forever too.

[14] Coser, R. (1975). Stay Home, Little Sheba: On Placement, Displacement, and Social Change. *Social Problems*, *22*(4), 470–480. https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.1975.22.4.03a00030
[15] Nelson, M. (2015). *The Argonauts*. Graywolf Press. p. 84.

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‘How can an experience so profoundly strange and wild and transformative also symbolize and enact the ultimate conformity?’[16] asks Maggie Nelson in *The Argonauts.* It could be that conformity is site of refuge from an experience that is *so* wild and *so* transformative, answers Lauren Elkin, that in thinking this experience cannot be yours alone you ‘find that what you thought would bring you into line with your fellow humans has only thrown you deeper into your own body.’[17] You. ‘Singing seemed rather an intimate thing to do with people I hardly knew, but it was, at least, preferable to conversation,’[18] writes Rachel Cusk in *A Life’s Work*. We. We take classes. We learn how to breathe, when to push, how to breastfeed, how to swaddle, what to buy, what to read, ‘the literature [that] tactfully tones down references to the ultimately solitary nature of childbirth, and to the fact that attending classes for it is like attending classes for death,’[19] writes Cusk. And by the time we find out that the institution of motherhood is an industry sustained by consumption and branded by a rhetoric of perfection, we might be suffering raw exposure of all the senses to one’s surroundings and anxiously steeped in a need to cope, co-opted and policed by the delusional mother sugars’ hashtag filtered Instagrams memetically performing and semiotically depicting every way in which we are failing.

[16] Nelson, M. (2015). pp. 13-14.
[17] Elkin, L. (2018, July 17). Why All The Books About Motherhood? Retrieved April 30, 2020, from The Paris Review website: https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2018/07/17/why-all-the-books-about-motherhood/
[18] Cusk, R. (2001). *A Life’s Work*. London: Fourth Estate. p. 172.
[19] Cusk, R. (2001). p. 27.

Nemesis' indignant disapproval and bestowed shame is a psychosocial weapon within the contemporary matrescene. The commodification of motherhood is not only deeply embedded within the logics of capitalism, it is a curated theatre of moral maintenance.

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What is repentance in a permissive society? Doris Lessing's departure from 'the home' evokes social disapproval and suspicion from the Over-Eye. Invisible, immutable laws establish that only when her maternal aptitude, her mother*liness*, is assailed can she be tolerated. Maternity is a visceral lesson in structural violence and women's transitory status is acceptable before but not after motherhood.

She is remembered as having a steely discernible consciousness and to rarely speak of remorse. Her decision was made in anticipation of a way of life which would bring about freedom. It was efficient in its austerity and cherished in its precarity. Arriving in London, Lessing and her son shared a flat in Bayswater. They quickly moved to the home of an Italian family on Denbigh Road and into a complicated economy of borrowings and lendings that fattened their ration books by four. The house cracked and leaked from the war, dust burnt on a two-bar fire, the rented room was small, and there was little energy for writing. In 1950, they moved to a small flat in Kensington. That summer they climbed impossibly narrow stairs to unpack at the top of the family home of Joan and her son Ernest Rodker.

‘Writers, and particularly female writers, have to fight for the conditions they need to work,’[20] she said. Writing was paramount and the material conditions deemed necessary demanded sacrifice and distance from expectations on her time and emotions. Interruption must be negated. The event of not having, or lack, is a situation with extolled gravity. In the rented house she was one of many post (and inter-) war writers to enact (with optimism) a recomposition of the division of labour and the modern woman’s (perhaps the mother’s too) social position.

The flat was basic with essentials and furnishings provided by the housekeeper. In the evening, seated at the kitchen table, they would exchange meals and share long conversations. Doris and Peter Lessing resided at Church Street for four years. In Ernest and Joan they established a logical rather than biological family structure,[21] which continued into their later years living independently. The arrangement sustained solitude alongside companionship and routine, the opportunity to bring up a child as well as the freedom to think and write.

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George Sand would wake in the night to write by candlelight, the night being sovereign from the patriarchal governance of the day. With assertion, rolled tobacco and suited in male clothing, Sand would circulate Paris as an illegal dandy, a maiden of justice, a winged woman full of self. The *flâneuse* is brimmed with dissatisfaction and unscrupulously patrols the rhythmics of patriarchy as its masqueraded Nemesis.

[20] Lessing, D. (1997). *Walking in the Shade.* HarperCollins UK. p. 224.
[21] Maupin, A. (2017). *Logical Family: A Memoir*. Random House.

In her introduction to *Selfish Women*, Lisa Downing states that 'given that men are supposed to be "full of self" (assertive, confident, self-assured, driven), male selfishness is a minor infraction.' She continues, 'for women, who are supposed, in this binary logic that casts them as the mere complement of men, to be life-giving, to be nurturing, to be *for the other*, and therefore literally *self-less*, it is a far more serious transgression to be selfish while a woman—indeed it is a category violation of identity.'[22] Downing's opening quotes include George Sand writing in *Indiana* in 1832, that 'selfishness: nothing, perhaps, resembles it more closely than self-respect.'[23]

Sand's derive through the urban metropolis characterises Charles Baudelaire's figure of the *flâneur* with more than a little irony: she moves with autonomy, intellectualism and determination, an apologia for departure from social conventions, from the gendered home. For Baudelaire, the *flâneur* is 'a spectator [as] a prince who everywhere rejoices in his incognito. […] Away from home and yet [he feels] oneself everywhere at home,'[24] he is exclusively male and he is the unbridled portrait of modernity. To Baudelaire, Sand was 'stupid, heavy and garrulous' and 'her ideas on morals [had] the same depth of judgement and delicacy of feeling as those of janitresses and kept women,' he concludes with 'the fact that there are men who could become enamoured of this slut is indeed a proof of the abasement of the men of this generation.'[25] The woman is the house, the home plot. The janitresses may secure permit for passionate

[22] Downing, L. (2019). *Selfish Women*. Routledge. p. 1.
[23] Sand, G. (1832) in Downing, L. (2019). *Selfish Women*. Routledge. p. 1.
[24] Baudelaire, C. (1972). *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, ed. and trans. May, J. London: Phaidon Press. p. 12.
[25] Baudelaire, C. (2017). *My Heart Laid Bare*. London: Contra Mundum Press. p. 184.

liaison and political militancy with a neighbour but they must not spill out of the home and into the crowds.

A cold teaspoon churns the milk. Its back pierces the white vellum. A fermented ambrosia.

Lying together in bed I read Tove Jansson's *Moominmamma's Book of Thoughts* to my daughter and we share Moominmamma's fantasy of the island coming loose. 'All of a sudden we could be rippling in the water right there by our very own pier back home. Imagine if we drifted even further, sailing for years until the island toppled right off the edge of the world, like a coffee cup on a slippery tray…'[26] speculates Mamma. Her unblinking eyes beam from the etched bedroom, she is bolt upright on the edge of the bed as she *finds* herself thinking of *freedom and equality*: 'what a pity mothers can't just pick up and leave whenever they want and sleep out of doors. It is mothers in particular that could really do with it sometimes.'[27]

The home plot is bad real estate.

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We all have a voice in the discourse of motherhood, it is a public discourse.

[26] Jansson, T. (2010). *Moominmammas Book Of Thoughts*. SelfMadeHero. p. 35.
[27] Ibid.

This ubiquitous observational gaze holds up a hyper-regulation of mothers, keeping them under malevolent, omnipresent surveillance. They are public property.

But let's not get carried away, we need to govern our emotions. Any anger, any melodrama or negativity, will poison the milk.

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I am legally responsible for my daughter's primary care and would be held ideologically responsible and independently answerable should she go wayward. My job is to mother within a stratification of cultural abuse and to not speak of my despair at socio-environmental precipitation of wayward children in an ethically bankrupt and violent public environment. It is my task to not reproduce patriarchal oppression and the conditions of capital despite subsisting in its merciless germination. A political prudency blames the home, the nuclear family, marriage. In an eschewing, nothing-must-change systemic society I, singularly, am the best protection she has.

How to protest? Against moral theory that overlooks structural abuse in pursuit of an ethics of care and equality. Against repentance for 'ambivalent' mothering and broken homes. Against the economic discordance between the labours of 'work' and 'life'. Against a spousal concept that either legitimates or breaks trust. Against the preservation of marriage, the home plot and its varied geographies.

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Visible on still waters is only a small part of a whole iceberg, says Freud.[28] At the Oedipal shrine that is the secluded Bates Motel, Norman Bates tells Marion Crane that his mother is no more harmful 'than one of his stuffed birds.'[29] His semblance is soon tragically revealed to obscure his crime of matricide, the iceberg in all of its comprehensiveness. The psychiatrist diagnoses disassociate identity disorder (a shattering of the iceberg) but liberates Norman from blame, adding that it was his mother's unfit behaviour that had 'pushed him over the line', that she was 'a clinging, demanding woman'[30] and had failed in her small but significant role in founding the mental health of the next generation.

Vera Brittan too is shamed as a primary cause of her son, Harold Shipman's *fate* as 'the world's most prolific serial killer.'[31] He is recorded to have been the 'favourite' child of his domineering mother. This perverse blame game detaches the prolific serial killer from wider culture and casts an individual, the mother, as culpable. Her crime is to have instilled in him a sense of superiority that affected his later relationships, leaving him isolated, and eventually a lethal misogynist. 'Either I'm out of my mind, or this city is founded on crime,'[32] says Medea.

The mother is the culprit. She is to blame for her emotional misattunement with her child. Her negative internal working model,[33] her bad mothering, is formatively

[28] The iceberg is a ubiquitous metaphor derived from Sigmund Freud's theory of the mind: that only a fragment of our ideas and feelings are conscious or visible to us and the vast bulk of our mental content is unconscious or invisible to everyday introspection.
[29] Hitchcock, A. (1960). *Psycho*. Shamley Productions.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Sommerlad, J. (2018, April 26). *Who Was Harold Shipman And How Many Of His Patients Did He Kill?* Retrieved April 30, 2020, from The Independent website: https://www.google.co.uk/amp/s/www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/harold-shipman-doctor-death-serial-killer-gp-mass-murderer-hyde-manchester-itv-documentary-a8323176.html%3famp
[32] Wolf, C. (1998). *Media: A Modern Retelling*, trans. Cullen, J. London: Virago. p. 7.
[33] England and Wales Court of Appeal (Civil Division). (2018). *M (A Child)*. PO16C01149.

responsible for every kind of evil. Her sentimental or therapeutic parenting ruins her child. Her ambivalence or emotional distance causes autism and her overzealous smothering bears a callous killer.

Do serial killers have fathers?

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'Self-silencing is prescribed by norms, values, and image dictating what women are 'supposed' to be like: pleasing, unselfish, loving,' writes psychologist Dana C. Jack on women's depression and anger. She expands:

> As I listened to the inner dialogues of depressed women, I heard self-monitoring and negative self-evaluation in arguments between the 'I' (a voice of the self) and the 'Over-Eye' (the cultural, moralistic voice that condemns the self for departing from culturally prescribed 'shoulds'). The imperatives of the Over-Eye regarding women's goodness are strengthened by the social reality of women's subordination […] Inwardly, they experienced anger and confusion while outwardly presenting a pleasing, compliant self, trying to live up to cultural standards of a good woman in the midst of fraying relationships, violence, and lives that were falling apart.[34]

The discourses of selfishness, deeply threaded with value judgements, form an Over-Eye assessment of decisions made: to have ambition, to prioritise career, to deprioritise children, to 'choose' sexuality or political allegiance. The same cultural surveillance that routinely reviews women's level of commitment to motherhood and/or their ability to form a perfect, or 'good enough', emotional attunement with their child. The good-enough environmental provision: devotion is quantified, level of nurture verified, the ratio of goodness and badness is determined. Units of measure interrogate if she is a

[34] Ali, A., & Jack, D. C., (2010). *Silencing the Self Across Cultures: Depression and Gender in the Social World*. New York: Oxford University Press. p. 5.

monster or an angel but there is no such thing as good-enough as goodness is a state of grace, the difference lies in the possibility of virtue.

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