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Editorial

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EDITORIAL

Introducing the New *Studies in the Maternal*

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Issue 8(1) is the first issue of *Studies in the Maternal* that is published by Open Library of the Humanities (OLH), a publishing platform funded by a consortium of libraries that are committed to keeping scholarly publication accessible with no article processing charges for authors.

Studies in the Maternal began in 2009, and over the last seven years has produced eleven scholarly peer-reviewed issues that have been hosted by Birkbeck, University of London. This institutional platform has allowed the journal to remain outside of the commercial publishing world, enabling us to fulfil our mission of publishing open access, online, interdisciplinary scholarship about motherhood and the maternal across the humanities, arts and social sciences. Although hosted at Birkbeck, the journal remains unfunded. As good 'thrifty' citizens, we have, until now, happily embraced the 'homemade' aesthetic and piecemeal approach that this has given rise to, literally putting each issue together by hand, with the help of Naomi Bain in the IT department, who has consistently offered us her considerable skills and talents in making eleven beautiful electronic objects. Working in this way reminds us of the long history of entanglements between gender, craft, and home-based labour. Crucially it has allowed editors, guest editors, students, editorial assistants, contributors and readers control over content and distribution of the journal.

However, as an unfunded journal that has been reliant on the goodwill and hard work of all those involved, we have welcomed the opportunity to now move the journal to the OLH platform. Launched as an international network of scholars, librarians, programmers and publishers in January 2013, OLH is a charity that has

aims and desires not dissimilar to those of *Studies in the Maternal* – to make scholarly publishing fairer and more accessible, and to ensure its ongoing future through digital archiving. In addition to launching issue 8(1) with OLH, the eleven back issues of *Studies in the Maternal* have now also been moved to the new platform (see issue archive), and have retained much of their original look and feel. The new system for author submission and peer review frees up valuable time for those of us working on the editorial side of the journal, and the journal is now even more widely accessible. Crucially, we have managed to avoid introducing any charges to authors, artists and practitioners for processing their scholarly work. We do hope you will continue to use and enjoy the journal in its new form.

Issue 8 (1) is an open issue. By its nature it is not collated around a particular theme. And yet, in retrospect, the contributions to this issue appear to cluster around the issue of maternal relationality and the inherent and yet precarious transformational qualities and capacities within motherhood and the maternal.

In her meticulous and economical poem *Reading List or What was I Thinking?* Stav Poleg captures the absurdity of trying to keep on doing what one has been doing before becoming a mother. Her funny and poignant writing irradiates the destabilised maternal subject, grasping the initial naivety and then the surprise that the changes bring with them.

In *The Creation of Meaning During Pregnancy* Filipa Falcão Rosado & Maria Emília Marques share their initial findings from a qualitative and longitudinal relational investigation of the psychic processes of pregnancy. This research extends our understanding of the experience of pregnancy as the beginning of transformational psychic process that Bion characterises in terms of *catastrophic change* (Bion, 1965). Their study has important implications for the practices of health care professionals who work with pregnant women, which need to shift to allow for the ongoing process of birthing oneself as a mother, and of creating a baby in the mind of the mother-to-be during the temporal frame of pregnancy itself.

Keeping with the psycho-political, we are delighted to publish Jo Littler and Alison Winch's edited transcript of a round table discussion on *Feminism and Childcare* held at City University, London, in late 2014. Ever since second wave feminisms called

for the rearrangement of the domestic division of labour there have been attempts, across a range of disciplinary, policy and practice dimensions, to make childcare everyone's business. The participants of the seminar were Sara de Benedictis, Gideon Burrows, Tracey Jensen, Jill Rutter and Victoria Showunmi, who were asked to reflect on the stop-start progress we have made towards men and women sharing childcare, and to probe the barriers – social, psychological, cultural, economic, political – to this psychosocial transformation. Their comprehensive critical reflections open up important questions about current cultural representations of feminist debates about childcare and domestic work, the nuances of unequal childcare that include social impediments to being able to care for children, the resonant histories and politics of daycare, the complexity of families and the resulting complexity of discussions about equality and care, and men's place in a feminist debate about childcare.

Victoria Scotti and Ashanti Prentice offer a collaborative visual inquiry about transitioning to motherhood. Using the subversive artistic method of altering, defacing, and remaking books, they present a project that entails their material interventions into coffee table photographic books about new motherhood. Assigning new, less idealised, meanings to the already existing texts allows them to suggest more realistic representations of motherhood in all its ambivalence and complexity.

Our 'In Conversation' piece is conversation between Lisa Baraitser and the poet and philosopher Denise Riley, that takes as a starting point her 2012 work, *Time Lived Without its Flow* (Capsule Editions, 2012) which is a maternal response to the loss of a child. The conversation takes in the relations between motherhood, futurity, attachment, care, and writing, and is framed by a discussion of what happens to time after the sudden death of a child. This moving and captivating conversation mirrors the book and beautifully conveys the creative tensions maternal states generate.

In Elena Marchevska's evocative piece, *The Place Where we were Last Together: Encountering the Border from Within*, she works with both Bracha Ettinger and Gloria Anzaldúa's notions of border crossings and border linkings, in order to explore the maternal-feminine as a structuring dimension in the affects and ethics of compassion.

Using her own experiences of crossing national borders 'with child', the medicalized experience of birth, and the transformation of these disturbing experiences through art practice that involves cutting and stitching, she reveals the relations between national, bodily and psychic borders and the struggles to find a 'voice' through processes of border crossings.

In the review section, Penelope Mendonça reviews *The Fallen Woman* an exhibition curated by the art historian Lynda Nead at the Foundling Museum, London. The museum is situated on the original foundling hospital site, a hospital that was set up to care for babies at risk of abandonment. The exhibition brought to life the experiences of women who applied to have their babies taken into the hospital. Finally, we are pleased to include a book review by Heather Belnap Jensen of *Mothering Mennonite*, a collection of essays, creative writing, and poetry edited by Rachel Epp Buller and Kerry Fast. The book was published by Demeter Press, a feminist academic publisher based in Canada that publishes books on the topic of motherhood.

We look forward to your comments on Facebook, Twitter and the MaMSIE blog.

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Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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