

Nativity and Motherism: Embodiment within Praxis of Spiritual Leadership

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Abstract

Ali Green (2009: 51) has observed that “[w]omen’s experiences of giving birth have historically been under-explored as a resource for theology, but this essentially female function, now bodily represented by the woman priest, clearly symbolizes aspects of the divine”. In this article we explore — through Grace Jantzen’s (1998) notion of natality, and the contested framing of “motherism” — the significance of giving birth and mothering to spiritual and religious leadership. We suggest that the experience of giving birth and the praxis of mothering provide not only a conceptual framework to harness new thinking about spiritual leadership and traditional theological doctrines, but also a practical means to transform patriarchal religious spaces. Drawing on feminist theology (which begins with personal experience — our own and shared) we show that there is a reciprocal relationship between mothering and priesthood, which transcends essentialist notions of mothering by embracing embodiment in a holistic praxis of spiritual leadership.

Secretly Bleeding and Feeding

The Anglican Church of Southern Africa’s Diocese of Natal recently celebrated its annual Chrism Eucharist at the Cathedral of the Holy Nativity

in Pietermaritzburg. This service brings most of the diocesan and “self-supporting” clergy together, robed and wearing white stoles. They gather to renew their diaconal and priestly vows. While the archdeacons and bishops surrounded the altar in their sweeping capes and white mitres, Eliza sat in the pew secretly bleeding, thinking how ironic it was that for centuries this was one of the explicit reasons women were not welcome in the sanctuary.¹ The previous year she had sat in the same pew, discreetly breastfeeding her baby. Our female bodies can do funny things: bleed, swell up, grow new life, give birth, produce milk, and feed other bodies.

When Sarojini’s second son was born through an emergency C-section, her six-year-old son insisted to the nurse who was attending to the wound that he wanted to have a look. He took one look at the wound and turned his head away in disgust, declaring, “That should come with an age restriction of eighteen!” He was promptly told by the nurse: “This is what mummies go through to give life.” All Nathan could muster was a screwed-up face and the expression “eeww!”

Indeed, the expression of “eeww” seems to capture some of the church’s response to women’s bodily experiences of bleeding and swelling. Such bodily female experiences have not been acceptable topics of theological conversation, and neither have they been acceptable topics of “polite conversation” in the larger society. Women’s bodies do “funny things”, and these “funny things” have been the cause of their exclusion from many forms of leadership — not least of all, in the church.

Twenty years after the first ordination of women to the priesthood in the Anglican Church in Southern Africa, and despite her own ordination as a priest, something still did not cohere for Eliza as she sat in the pew at this Christ Eucharist contemplating the disjuncture between women’s daily lived and bodily experiences and theological doctrine and practical ministry.

Locating Ourselves and the Topic

And so we come to the topic of this disjuncture and separation — one of us as a mother of four sons, an Anglican priest reading for a Ph.D., and an erstwhile school chaplain; and the other a mother of two sons, part of the laity in the Lutheran Church, and an associate professor in the interdisciplinary fields of gender and religion — both of us “concerned African women theologians”.² This disjuncture between bodily experience and the praxis of spiritual leadership is what concerns us. Ruth Mantin has rightly asserted:

One of the many great contributions that feminist theology has made to the study and practice of religion is the effective

challenge it presents to a dominant discourse which places a transcendent, metaphysical God over against the profane realities of a messy, dirty, material world. In dismantling such a dualistic paradigm, feminist theology has affirmed the sacrality of embodiment. (Mantin 2004: 212)

While the “sacrality of embodiment” seems to be entrenched in feminist theological scholarship, we are interested in how this is lived out practically in women’s leadership. Women bishops in the Anglican Church in Southern Africa are finally a reality. In the past year there have even been two consecrations of women bishops. While these are positive steps, the question remains: do these “mothers” of the church change ecclesiology — the praxis of ministry? Do they change the way we understand ourselves and act out the *missio dei* (mission of God) in the world?

The questions we seek to answer in this article are these: what is the significance and contribution of giving birth and mothering to the male-defined role of ministry; and how can theological resources and philosophical reasoning on embodiment contribute to the transformation of such ministry?

We begin with a discussion on the philosophical and theological discourses of *natality*.

Natality

Grace Jantzen writes that the church has forgotten that we are “natals” because we are so preoccupied with being mortals. Jantzen writes:

I suggest that much of traditional philosophy of religion (and western culture generally) is preoccupied with violence, sacrifice and death, and built upon mortality not only as a human fact but as a fundamental philosophical category. But what if we were to begin with birth, and with the hope and possibility and wonder implicit in it? [What] if we were to treat natality and the emergence of *this* life and *this* world with the same philosophical seriousness and respect which had traditionally been paid to mortality and the striving for other worlds? My aim in this book is to show that such a feminist approach is philosophically viable, and opens up new ways of considering religion, human flourishing, identity, and difference, and ecological concern. (Jantzen 1998: 2; emphases original)

Jantzen argues that our collective, overwhelming focus on death and the hereafter is misplaced. Expanding on Jantzen's notion of natality, Janet Trisk states:

The process of becoming divine and refusing to allow parts of ourselves to shrivel contrasts with the dominant Western Christian fascination with and dread of death — necrophilia and necrophobia. So human beings are described as “mortals” (rather than “natals”) and much of the focus of Christianity is on what happens *after* life, treating this life as merely a preparation for something better. (Trisk 2008: 198)

Trisk's explication of Jantzen echoes the slogan of *Christian Aid*: “We believe in life *before* death”.³ In choosing natality as a lens through which to view ministry, we have the possibility of a transformed ministry based on the here and now, rather than on the afterlife. Practically, this means placing the understanding and experience of giving birth at the very centre of our lives and worship. Moreover, this philosophical and theological reasoning extends itself, not only to transformed constructions of humanity, but to transformed conceptions about God. This reasoning encourages us to live and worship in the full knowledge that “the Word was made flesh” and pitched his tent among us — indeed, that God was embodied and born and lived like us.

We concur with Jantzen and others that if this image of natality (rather than mortality) was the central image of the church, women would be able to celebrate our own female bodies without fear and shame. Even more, a woman as priest iconically represents something more powerful than we have imagined. Theology and the scriptures need to be mined for these positive images of flourishing, rather than of dying and violence — the obsession with necrophilia, as Jantzen describes it.

Anita Diamant provides a good example of how to “mine” powerful biblical images in her novel *The Red Tent* (1997), where she harnesses Old Testament stories and retells them from a woman's perspective. In the voice of her narrator, Dinah, Diamant recreates a biblical history that has been lost: that of women's society and experience. She delves into stories of menstruation, ritual, relationship, rape, midwifery, birth, and death. The red tent was the place where the women went to rest during their monthly bleeding. It was a place men avoided, because of the impurity that it represented. It was a place of freedom. Here the mature women initiated the girls with tales of their legendary, life-giving power:

In the red tent, the truth is known. In the red tent, where days pass like a gentle stream, as the gift of Innana courses

through us, cleansing the body of last month's death, preparing the body to receive the new month's life, women give thanks — for repose and restoration, for the knowledge that life comes from between our legs, and that life costs blood. (Diamant 1997: 157-158)

A passing visit to any church on a Sunday will reveal that the majority of the membership comprises women. What if women used the spaces they have within their churches (for example, The Mothers Union in the Anglican Church or the Women's Associations of the United Congregational Church) to encourage embodied Christian theology and praxis, rather than only focusing on prayer and fundraising (the importance of the latter two activities notwithstanding)? Furthermore, although the red tent symbolically offers an interesting retreat space, it also offers us possibilities to consider the challenge that women represent in our powerful bodiliness at the altar and at the eucharistic table. Women move toward the altar washed in our own blood and the blood of Christ.

On the Chrim Eucharist day of rededication (a day of the vow), the gathered clergy intoned part of Psalm 116 together, uttering words about "the cup of salvation" and "a sacrifice of thanksgiving". The New Testament reading from Hebrews 9:11-15 names Christ "a high priest of the good things that have come". It recalls the old covenant with the blood of sacrificial animals, and replaces it with the new one sealed with the blood of Christ. There is an overwhelming focus on death and the hereafter:

For this reason he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, because a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant.

The next convoluted paragraph was not read, but it is relevant to this conversation on bloodletting and purification. Hebrews 9:16-22, like the Exodus passage, revels in the bloody mess and in death:

Where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive. Hence not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. For when every commandment had been told to all the people by Moses in accordance with the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet

wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the scroll itself and all the people, saying, “This is the blood of the covenant that God has ordained for you.” And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

Christ’s Sacrifice Takes Away Sin

The passage sounds like the kind of bloody mess one sees in a Quentin Tarantino film. The theological implications notwithstanding, the haunting question for overworked mothers, who are constantly picking up and cleaning, remains: “Who will clean it up?” A further question is, why is there so much fixation in the Christian tradition on sacrificial male blood (shed in battle and turned into poppies); Christ’s blood (shed on the Roman instrument of torture and execution, then turned into wine); and the blood of calves and bulls and goats (the “scapegoats” taking on the sins of the community and slaughtered to feed and placate a hungry, jealous God)? Despite all this bloody fixation, the church grapples with an unshakable aversion to female menstrual blood. This potentially life-giving blood carries deep connotations of impurity and danger and shame.

Gloria Steinem describes the irony implicit in this fear of the female body when she reflects on the architecture of traditional buildings of worship:

[T]he traditional design of most patriarchal buildings of worship imitates the female body. Thus, there is an outer and an inner entrance, labia majora and labia minora; a central vaginal aisle toward the altar; two curved ovarian structures on either side; and then in the sacred centre, the altar or womb, where the miracle takes place — where males give birth. (Steinem 2001: xvii)

Following this observation, she draws the conclusion that

[t]he central ceremony of patriarchal religions is one in which men take over the yoni-power of creation by giving birth symbolically. No wonder male religious leaders so often say that humans were born in sin — because we were born to female creatures. Only by obeying the rules of the patriarchy can we be reborn through men. No wonder

priests and ministers in skirts sprinkle imitation birth fluids over our heads, give us new names, and promise rebirth into everlasting life. No wonder the male priest tries to keep women away from the altar, just as women are kept away from control of our own powers of reproduction. Symbolic or real, it's all devoted to controlling the power that resides in the female body. (Steinem 2001: xvii-xviii)

And the power that resides in the female body is given its fullest expression in the most basic and practical experiences of birthing and mothering.

Thus far in this article, attention has been given to describing the philosophical and theological notion of natality as a conceptual framework to harness new thinking about spiritual leadership and traditional theological doctrines. We now shift attention to the experiences of giving birth and mothering, and the ways in which these experiences provide a practical means to transform patriarchal religious spaces, especially in the praxis of ministry.

Motherism

Women's experiences of giving birth have historically been under-explored as a resource for theology, but this essentially female function, now bodily represented by the woman priest, clearly symbolizes aspects of the divine. (Green 2009: 51)

In order to appreciate the assertion made by Green, motherhood has to be understood ontologically and in daily lived experience. Unfortunately, the gulf between the ontological and lived realities makes this difficult to do.

Yet much of the complex work mothers do is exactly what priests do, as well. In her role as priest, Eliza has come to the profound recognition that priesting is about "mothering" people: holding their hands, feeding them, mediating conflict, containing emotions during transitional moments — and, of course, offering them forgiveness and absolution. This complex work can be captured in the term "motherism".

Before we explicate the implications for ministry of a motherist view, it is first important to clarify what we mean by the term and how we are using it. It is important to state upfront that we reject the dualistic and unhelpful distinctions made between motherism and feminism. Notwithstanding our opposition to these distinctions, we acknowledge that "motherism" has sometimes — especially in Africa — been used in biologically essentialist ways.

Desiree Lewis succinctly captures the ways in which some scholars essentialise the discourse, thereby buying into oppressive gender stereotypes:

[S]ome theorists' concern with evaluating African women's "difference" lead them to equate social roles and ascribed identities with alternative feminisms. For example, Catherine Obianuju Acholonu, in her book *Motherism: The Afrocentric Alternative to Feminism* writes that "Africa's alternative to feminism is MOTHERISM and Motherism denotes motherhood, nature and nurture". (Lewis 2001: 6)

Moving forward with an understanding of motherism as not distinct from or in opposition to feminism, we use motherism as a prism through which we can understand women's praxis of ministry.

Firstly, we consider motherism to denote mothering as experience, not motherhood as a patriarchal institution.⁴ Secondly, as already noted, we acknowledge the distinctly African nature of this conceptualisation, more particularly in the context of activism and resistance, rather than of biological essentialism. We will discuss each of these considerations in turn, with regard to the praxis of ministry.

Mothering as Experience

An amusing and fairly comprehensive list has been making the rounds recently on Facebook and other social media that offers a good retort to the old arguments about why women should stay away from the altar and ordained ministry. It has been attributed to Fuller Seminary professor of exegesis David M. Scholer. The most relevant rejoinder in the context of this particular article is:

To be ordained pastor is to nurture the congregation. But this is not a traditional male role. Rather, throughout history, women have been considered to be not only more skilled than men at nurturing, but also more frequently attracted to it. This makes them the obvious choice for ordination.⁵

Although the list is meant to be tongue-in-cheek, it points to the deeply significant role of nurturing traditionally assigned to mothers. While the service of nurturing should not be determined by biology, the experience of nurturing reminds us of the nurturing that happens at the altar.

The experience of mothering, of nurturing at the altar, revindicates the necessity and the value of domestic labour, both at the altar and in the

home, and is part of the powerful witness that clergymothers can bring to an institution that has idealised the work of the clergy while undervaluing the same work done by countless women (and a growing number of liberated men) on the home front. The altars in our homes — our kitchen tables, though cluttered with the flotsam and jetsam of family life — are still sacred spaces to be reclaimed, and at which we can break bread and celebrate. This is the same “mothering” work of feeding and serving and mediating conflict and forgiving the “natals” in our care. We do this work so that we all can grow into our embodiment and give birth to new horizons of hope — and true equality for all — in the church and in the world.

And so the experience of mothering becomes a catalyst for transformation and change in both theology and ministry. It is to this discussion that we now turn.

Motherism for Transformation and Change

The role of women in the struggle for liberation in South Africa is well documented in research done by students and scholars (see Hassim 1990; Schreiner 1986; and Wells 1982). What is of interest is that in each of the research projects undertaken on this subject, the role of motherhood as a driving and uniting force of resistance emerges very strongly. As Sarojini Nadar has noted:

While motherhood in much feminist discourse has been seen to limit the role of women in the public, banishing them to the home and to domestic matters, in Africa it is conversely linked to women finding solidarity to participate in the public sphere. (Nadar 2013: 65)

How can the solidarity located within the experience of mothering — motherism — be harnessed in the project of a transformed ministry? One way is to reclaim the power of giving birth as a foundational source of theological anthropology and ministry.

Many Christians have unquestioningly inherited, and continue to propagate, an ancient Hebrew creation story that smacks distinctly of “womb envy”.⁶ How do we accept the story of a male God scratching in the dust and creating a world that supposedly culminates with a fully fledged adult male “earth creature” who then gives birth via Caesarean section to a fully fledged female “mother of all living”? Feminist scholars and many clergywomen prefer the symbolism of the Holy Spirit (present as the breath of God) moving over the water and into the dust — a reminder that God is in our every breath. Azila Reisenberger, a Jewish faith community leader and Hebrew

academic at the University of Cape Town, explains further that the *zela* of Adam was actually a whole side that has been conveniently mistranslated as “rib” (Reisenberger 1993: 447). The continued misinterpretation is used in an attempt to keep women in our small, fruitless, and frustrated place.

Celebrating, in the Eucharist and in our lives, Jesus’ and our own natality and our present life here and now, is what lies at the heart of natality. Jesus did not just appear as a fully fledged adult creature, any more than Eve did! He first had to be humanly gestated and born. Mary was the receptive co-creator, and her pregnancy and Jesus’ birth are reminders that our bodies are good, beautiful, divinely created, blessed, and holy. Our bodies are as holy as Jesus’ own body was — and as holy as Jesus’ body is each time we consecrate it in a eucharistic service.

The second way to use motherism in the service of a transformed ministry is to continuously reinforce the idea that originally, the eucharistic feast was a real meal with real bread and wine. Jesus instructs his disciples to make the preparations (understand: “shop” and “cook” and “set the table” — those menial chores routinely assigned to women). The ironic use of the image of the secret signal of “a man carrying a jar of water” is not lost on women who are used to “carrying the can”. Jesus turns on its head the burden of expectation regarding gendered work and sexual division of labour. And then he does what mothers do for their families the world over: he offers the disciples the nourishment of food and drink. This is exactly what is happening in pregnancy and breastfeeding. We offer our bodies to feed and form and grow our children.

[Jesus] took bread and gave you thanks. He broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: “Take this, all of you, and eat it: this is my body which will be given up for you.” When the supper was ended, he took the cup. Again he gave you thanks and praise, gave the cup to his disciples, and said: “Take this all of you, and drink from it: this is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven. Do this in memory of me.” (An Anglican Prayer Book 1989: 123)

This body and blood of Christ that we bless and invite the congregation to share: is it not our bodies too? The possibilities for transformation are endless if we reconceptualise the Eucharist in this way.

Thirdly, the gendered and biological difference that women (and mothers) bring to ministry provides a dangerous opportunity to challenge and change the church. Obviously, there is a difference between clergymen and clergywomen in terms of identity — but difference is also discernible

in terms of praxis. Our different gendered and biological experience and perspective will inevitably impact on how we perform and function in the role of the priest within the congregation and the institution. Acting as the priest within the congregation in turn impacts on clergymothers' understandings of ourselves within our families. To move beyond the danger of making assumptions and generalisations, we need to listen to each other's stories and to learn from each other's experiences. This is precisely what the experience of doing interviews with other clergymothers afforded Eliza Getman during her Ph.D. research.

Scratch the surface of our lives and we may find that we are all bleeding. "I'm holding on by my fingertips and they are pouring blood", approximates how one clergymother whom Eliza interviewed described the experience of living out the joint callings of priesthood and motherhood. Another interviewee said: "What were we thinking to take on this clergy yoke? Who are we trying to save? It is as banal and as emotionally demanding as domesticity — but generally speaking with a nicer uniform." To paraphrase another clergywoman, "I'm just as sinful as the rest of you, but at least I look good in my clericals and robes."

Clergy burnout is frequent, but exploring that is beyond the scope of this article. However, there is an element of judgement provoked by the exclusive image of a stern father God that we urgently need to counterbalance with gentleness and self-care. Julian of Norwich, 14th-century mystic, writer, and faithful daughter of the church, was never a biological mother; yet her words and wisdom ring true, and continue to nurture and nourish those who are hungry for a broader and more inclusive experience and description of God in the practical life of the church. This is what she understood Jesus' example of service to mean, and perhaps this is the service we as priests are called to in ministry:

He is our Mother in human nature, our Mother in grace — because he wished to become our Mother in everything, he accepted the foundation of his work most lowly and most mildly in the Maiden's womb.

That is to say, our high God, the supreme wisdom of all, in this lowly womb clothed himself and enclosed himself most willingly in our poor flesh, in order that he himself could do service and the duty of motherhood in everything.

To the quality of motherhood belongs natural love, wisdom and knowledge — and this is God. (as quoted in Holness 2008: 96)⁷

There has not been enough attention focused on the shattering of the stained glass ceiling that is happening in the church. There is not yet a comprehensive body of literature written by women priests or about these women's journeys.

The literature on motherism is dated (mostly the '70s, '80s, and '90s) and in fact, it has recently come to denote something more akin to discrimination, as in *sexism* or *racism*. *Motherism*, in other words, has come to describe discrimination against mothers. This is not the spirit of the term we wish to reclaim. The motherism we wish to claim is the one — now outdated, it seems — that strengthened and inspired social and political movements such as the Black Sash and the Women's March on Parliament in 1956. Notwithstanding the perceived “non-threatening” status of motherist movements, these movements, like the feminist movement, have been subsumed by something far more domesticated in post-apartheid South Africa. A large number of mothers, for example, was seen to gather outside the courts where the Jacob Zuma rape trial was happening, showing support for the accused then-deputy president. Similarly in the church, the “mothers' movements” are restricted to training “domestic goddesses”, and miss out on the opportunity such spaces provide for activism and leadership.

Yet the possibilities of subverting patriarchy through the power of motherhood remain. *Voices of This Calling: Experiences of the First Generation of Women Priests* (Francis-Dehqani 2002) gave ordained Anglican women in Britain the opportunity to tell their stories of struggle and transformation within the church. These include the stories of several mothers. Gulnar Francis-Dehqani ends her chapter “Motherhood and Priesthood: Integrating Roles” on a hopeful note:

So for me the journey continues. Not to demarcate with precise accuracy the roles of mother and priest, but to learn how to fully integrate the two. There are, of course, always time limitations and practical considerations, but both motherhood and priesthood are about more than doing a particular job, in a given time, before clocking off. They are for me about learning to “be”. Existing before God by striving to fulfil my potential in any given situation and allowing myself to give of my best. Permitting the different elements of the two vocations to co-exist, to merge and feed each other. (Francis-Dehqani 2002: 116-117)

Conclusion

Bodies and bodily practices can slowly but surely change the way women

understand ourselves; and in turn, women can change the way we act in the world. We have a long history of male symbolism to overturn, but an equally long and valid history of women's agency to reclaim. In her book *The Body of God*, Sally McFague juxtaposes the idea of the Incarnation with the experience of embodiment:

Christianity is *par excellence* the religion of the Incarnation, and, in one sense, is about nothing but embodiment, as is evident in its major doctrines. In another sense Christianity has denied, subjugated, and at times despised the body, especially female human bodies and bodies in the natural world. (McFague 1993: 164)

Embodiment means that we accept our enfleshment, and that we recognise that our physical reality impacts on who we are and how we live. We cannot be exclusively concerned about people's spiritual lives (or their intellectual ideas about religion) without taking their bodies into account. Our bodily experience matters.

Poet and priest Philip Newell and his wife, Ali, spent many years as church leaders on the Scottish island of Iona. He recalls the words of the founder of the modern-day incarnation of that Celtic Christian community, George MacLeod: "matter matters". Newell explains:

We have tragically divided the word *matter* from its Latin root, *mater*, which means "mother." All matter — the matter of the stars and planets, the matter of the earth and its fecund energies, the matter of our bodies and their deepest yearnings — all things come forth from the Mother. They are all conceptions of Spirit, which is to say that the matter of the universe is holy. In other words, matter matters. (Newell 2011: 16)

And because matter matters, God too is actively giving birth to us every day. We are charged with raising children and growing a church where all are welcome, all are authentic, all are engaged, and all are responsible for the setup and cleanup of the altars — the altars in the church, and the ones we encounter after the final hymn and dismissal. As Barbara Brown Taylor so aptly says: "Earth is so thick with divine possibility that it is a wonder we can walk anywhere without cracking our shins on altars" (Taylor 2009: 15).

Yet while altars are found beyond the doors of the church, we still choose to stay within the institution to encourage an expansion of our ecclesiastical

and liturgical horizons. Within the church we can broaden our understanding and experience of Emmanuel/Nkosinathi/“God with us” — God who mothers us into maturity so that we can mother others in turn.

Theologian and liturgist Janet Morley sees these possibilities and harnesses this courageous theological thinking, developing it for praxis in the church through the following prayer:

God our Mother, you hold our life within you,
nourish us at your breast, and teach us to walk alone.
Help us so to receive your tenderness and respond to your
challenge
that others may draw life from us, in your name, Amen.
(Morley 2006: 25)⁸

We, like Morley, recognise and affirm the motherhood of God and the mothering way of Christ. Therefore we choose to break and share and sink our teeth into divine bread, knowing our human bodies are also an acceptable sacrifice — not through mortality, but through generous and gracious and incarnate natality.

Notes

- 1 Ancient purity laws concerning menstruation can be found in Leviticus 15: 19-31.
- 2 The authors first met in the context of the Cape Town chapter of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. Each of us was a young masters student at the time, inserting ourselves into this group of interfaith women seeking to entrench justice for women within religion by researching and publishing theology from within the ambit of their own experiences.
- 3 See <http://www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/churches/reflections/do-you-believe-in-life-before-death.aspx>.
- 4 In a review of Obiama Nnaemeka’s (1997) book *The Politics of (M)Othering: Womanhood, Identity and Resistance in African Literature*, Nicki Hitchcott observes that “[w]hilst maternity has been rejected by some feminists as a site for the oppression of women, this volume emphasizes the distinction between mothering as experience, and motherhood as patriarchal institution” (Hitchcott 1998: 234).
- 5 See <http://feminary.blogspot.com/2005/11/top-ten-reasons-why-men-should-not-be.html>, accessed 7 November 2013.
- 6 German psychoanalyst Karen Horney coined the term, along with a theory arguing that male “envy of pregnancy, nursing, and motherhood — of women’s primary role in creating and sustaining life — led men to claim their superiority in other fields.” <http://global.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/646895/womb-envy>, accessed 7 November 2013.
- 7 Miscellaneous excerpts from *A Lesson of Love: The Revelations of Julian of Norwich*, as quoted in Lyn Holness (2008).

- 8 Morley's Collect 53; Motherly Saviour, based on Julian of Norwich's *Showings*, is on p. 26. It reads: "Christ our true mother, you have carried us within you, laboured with us, and brought us forth to bliss. Enclose us in your care, that in stumbling we may not fall, nor be overcome by evil, but know that all shall be well, Amen."

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