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In Defense of the Unmother: Rhetoric, Motherhood, and Social Networking

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In Defense of the Unmother: Rhetoric, Motherhood, and Social Networking

Rebecca Ingalls

Accumulating thousands of testimonials, cycle charts, and photographs of positive pregnancy tests, fertility social networking sites offer consolation and hope to women who are trying to conceive. Despite the comfort they bring, however, the words and images of these sites help to perpetuate a divisive message about the superlative virtue of childbearing, constituting those who cannot or choose not to become parents as morally and physically inferior.

I set out to do this analysis because I wanted to illustrate the message-within-the message in the online rhetorical constructions of mothering and "unmothering." I emerged from this research with a push for a rhetorical re-conception of female achievement that hopes to imagine a new kind of feminist solidarity, a way of seeing progeny in a new light.

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PART 1

"It Will Go On": The Calling of Motherhood

In the middle of J. M. Barrie's classic children's novel, *Peter Pan and Wendy*, Captain Hook has attempted to lure Peter and the Lost Boys with cake but has become disheartened to find that, with the arrival of Wendy (who, as their "mother," knew well enough to keep the cake away from the Boys), he must re-strategize in the quest to conquer them. As he speaks to his men, Peter and Wendy hide in the water:

"The game's up," he cried, "those boys have found a mother."

Affrighted though she was, Wendy swelled with pride. "O evil day!" cried Starkey.

"What's a mother?" asked the ignorant Smee.

Wendy was so shocked that she exclaimed, "He doesn't know!" and always after this she felt that if you could have a pet pirate Smee would be her one. Peter pulled her beneath the water, for Hook had started up, crying, "What was that?"

"I heard nothing," said Starkey, raising the lantern over the waters, and as the pirates looked they saw a strange sight. It was the nest I have told you of, floating on the lagoon, and the Never bird was sitting in it.

The story promises that the Lost Boys' insatiable desire for mothering will continue through ages of relying on the daughter-mother to soothe and care for them.

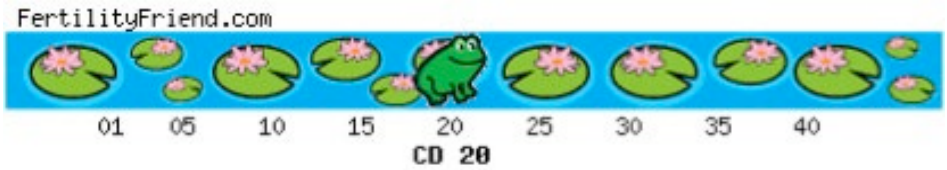
“See,” said Hook in answer to Smee’s question, “that is a mother. What a lesson! The nest must have fallen into the water, but would the mother desert her eggs? No.”

There was a break in his voice, as if for a moment he recalled innocent days when—but he brushed away this weakness with his hook. (84)

A digital memorial to pregnancy lost to miscarriage.

Seeing Peter being mothered by Wendy ignites a fierce envy in Hook that he doesn’t quite understand. Hook’s reaction illuminates a gloom shared by all who live in Neverland: not only do they not have mothers but, sadly, they don’t have the first clue about how precious mothering is. Like the Nothing in Michael Ende’s *Neverending Story*, which threatens to take over the world with a dark void of imagination, Neverland is afflicted with the famine of motherlessness. Peter and the Lost Boys make Wendy Darling their temporary mother, and they find that they desire her as if she were a home-cooked meal and they were starving. Wendy, who even at her young age cannot imagine *not* being a mother, is most happy to play this role. And, of course, when Wendy must return home, the story promises that the Lost Boys’ insatiable desire for mothering will continue through ages of relying on the daughter-mother to soothe and care for them.

Barrie’s childhood fiction—its heart-wrenching scenes of lonely, unkempt children and the powerful contrast between a fantastic world devoid of mothering and a world where the mother is the epitome of all that is tender and kind—taps into a cultural meta-narrative, a story with which we are very familiar: motherhood, especially in a heterosexual context, is one of



A "ticker" indicating the menstrual cycle day (CD) of the user.

Source: '"FertilityFriend.com Community"

life's greatest roles and an expectation for women. It is a story that permeates written and oral traditions, and today the Internet provides a forum virtually free of the boundaries of physical space and time in which to continue this story. A seasoned or first-time mother, a woman struggling to conceive, or a woman seeking to adopt need look no further than the Web, where countless blogs, fertility charting software, and discussion boards nurture her hope to do what she believes she was put on Earth to do. The discussion boards of *BabyCenter* and *The Bump* (a sister site to *The Knot)*, two popular sites, are rich with worldwide wisdom from women whose online signatures represent the gamut of mothering, from birthdates of living children to memorials of babies lost to miscarriage or infant death.

Elsewhere online, the very popular *FertilityFriend.com* consoles those interested in "charting [their] way to conception" and maintains a huge database of basal temperature charts (over 126,000) and ultrasound photos (12,000) for women to consult. *FertilityCommunity.com* awaits the woman whose attempts at natural conception have failed, offering resources in considering IVF, sperm donation, and adoption. And Mombian (Lesbian + Mom) offers a space where lesbian parents can gather to discuss parenting and politics. Sites like these, which attract thousands of want-to-be and current mothers, help to cultivate community among them, to ease their doubts, to protect their hopes, and to build their knowledge. In a sense, the textual and visual rhetoric of these online communities mother the mothers who inhabit them.

Perhaps, for the woman who has chosen not to mother, these sites would be of no interest, as *Wine.com* might be of no interest to one who does not drink. But that's not a reasonable comparison, is it? *Wine.com* does not claim that drinking wine is the most significant choice a woman can make. To become a connoisseur of wine (or not) is a choice far less culturally weighted than the decision to become a parent, and children are not commodities. Cultivating an epicurean love for wine does not come close to the identity work involved in caring for a child. And to be sure, unlike most cultural options, mainstream media do not offer women an easy choice between mothering and not mothering. Indeed, much of the Web media addressing conception and childbirth sends another message to another audience: the decision not to bear children, or *unmotherhood*, is unnatural—and it signifies a less meaningful life.

Mainstream media do not offer women an easy choice between mothering and not mothering.

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PART II

The Narrative Online: Social Networking Sites and their Stories

In the context of this discussion, "unmotherhood" does not refer to one's identity *before* motherhood, as I saw it depicted in my research on this subject. To give myself an idea of whether and how the word "unmother[hood]" is currently being used online, I conducted an online search for the terms and came across a personal blog known as *The Rabbit Hole*, which details the many daily musings of photographer, writer, and human being, "Allison." In one post, she describes splurging on Tide detergent instead of less expensive brands: "I won't be able to justify the expenditure when I have a

baby… this is one of my guiltless pleasures for unmotherhood: expensive, yummy smelling Tide." For "Allison," motherhood lay ahead; as of the publication of this article, she is pregnant with her first child.

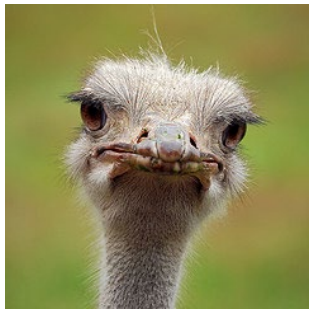

Figure 1 "Ostrich" Source: s evenseth, flickr

Nor do I interpret the word as it is used in theologian Horace Bushnell's 1861 text *Christian Nurture*, where my online search for the term took me next. In this text, Bushnell compares mothers who abandon their children to ostriches:

> The ostrich, it will be observed, is nature's type of all unmotherhood. She hatches her young without incubation, depositing her eggs in the sand to be quickened by the solar heat. Her office as a mother-bird is there ended. When the young are hatched, they are to go forth untended, or unmothered, save by the general motherhood of nature itself. Hence, the ostrich is called sometimes the "wicked" and sometimes the "stupid" bird… Now there is no human mother, unless it be in some terrible stress of siege and starvation, when the mind itself is unsettled by the wild instigation of suffering, who will cease from the bodily care and feeding of her children. (66-7)

Here, Bushnell refers to unmothering as the act of a woman who has physically become a mother, but who has undone herself from her role. That is not the definition I'm using, though there is plenty to discuss about cultural perceptions of "bad" mothering: the creation and subsequent neglect or abuse of children or, as has been discussed recently in media, the over-production of children (e.g., "Octomom") by women who do not have plentiful resources to support them.

To offer context for the definition of unmotherhood that I am using here, I'll go back into the framework of *Peter Pan* for a moment, to the very end of the text. At the close of the book, Barrie describes Wendy's descendents:

Disney's depiction of the lost boy and his "mother".

Source: "Peter Pan"

> As you look at Wendy, you may see her hair becoming white, and her figure little again, for all this happened long ago. Jane [Wendy's daughter] is now a common grown-up, with a daughter called Margaret; and every spring-cleaning time, except when he forgets, Peter comes for Margaret and takes her to the Neverland, where she tells him stories about himself, to which he listens eagerly. When Margaret grows up she will have a daughter, who is to be Peter's mother in turn; and thus it will go on, as long as children are gay and innocent and heartless. (165)

In Barrie's construction of the calling of motherhood, Peter represents much more than one boy in need, for all of Neverland aches for girls to fulfill their destinies of becoming mothers. In this story, Peter serves as a guardian who leads each girl on that path, and Barrie makes no room for the possibility that Margaret's daughter may not choose that path. What's more, if Margaret decides *against* becoming a mother, Hook wins.

This issue of opting out of mothering, and the cultural consequences that come with it, is at the heart of this discussion. Unmotherhood refers to the identity and cultural criticism of one who has decided not to raise children or is, as Harriet Malinowitz says, "childless by choice" as opposed to childless because of biological complications or the lack of a partner with whom to procreate (13).

According to *New York Magazine* writer Amy Sohn, "These days, it is no longer taboo to be gay or unmarried, but if you don't want kids, everyone looks down on you." In the context of Sohn's discussion, letting a potential mate know that you are not interested in procreating can be a major point of contention—not just a "deal-breaker" but also grounds for shock.

Central image on "Getting Pregnant." Source: "Getting Pregnant"

Malinowitz fills out this illustration of cultural judgment by drawing a parallel between perceptions of unmothers and teenage mothers:

> …we are commonly portrayed as damaged and, ultimately, as a drain on society—teenage mothers because of the problems inherent in supporting a child while working and obtaining higher education, unmothers because we will supposedly have no one to care for us in our old age. We are both held to be careless—teenage mothers in that they are shortsighted and irresponsible, and unmothers in that we are cold, narcissistic, and unfeeling—that is, lacking in the instinct of care. (18)

More succinctly put, it would seem that the assumptions embedded in the rhetorical construction of the mother—the pervasive argument that her role is meant to embody nurturing, selflessness, compassion, gentleness, patience—suggests that the woman who chooses *not* to take on this role possesses the opposite traits. It's a dangerous use of the transitive property (if x=y, and y=z, then x=z), but inverted.

Evidence for this kind of logic may be found in the rhetoric of social networking sites. In the multitude of sites designed to support the transition into motherhood, unmotherhood is perceptibly disparaged; it's the elephant in the room that the systematization of parenting quietly dismisses. Images of blissful children and couples (most of them heterosexual) perpetuate the dominant cultural standard of choosing to bear children.

Even more powerful, however, is the superlative language used by these sites to exalt pregnancy and mothering above all life choices. *FertilityFriend*, which charges customers a fee for using its charting software and accessing its galleries of positive pregnancy tests and ultrasound photos, tries to appeal to the emotional sensibilities of its customers, calling motherhood "this precious and most special of life's journeys." More specifically pointed is *BabyCenter*'s mission statement, which constitutes parenting as a kind of sacrament: "We believe this is the most challenging thing you'll ever

do. And the most extraordinary thing you'll ever do." And *Mothering* situates mothering on the grand scale of what can possibly be done by human beings: "Mothering celebrates the experience of parenthood as worthy of one's best efforts and fosters awareness of the immense importance and value of parenthood and family life in the development of the full human potential." Reading these qualifications in this order is like watching the world's tallest building rising up from the earth: mothering seems to tower above all other human feats, casting a very long shadow over the unmother, who is left at ground level to do her work and make her less praiseworthy choices.

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PART III

Is She or Isn't She?: The Online "Bump Watch"

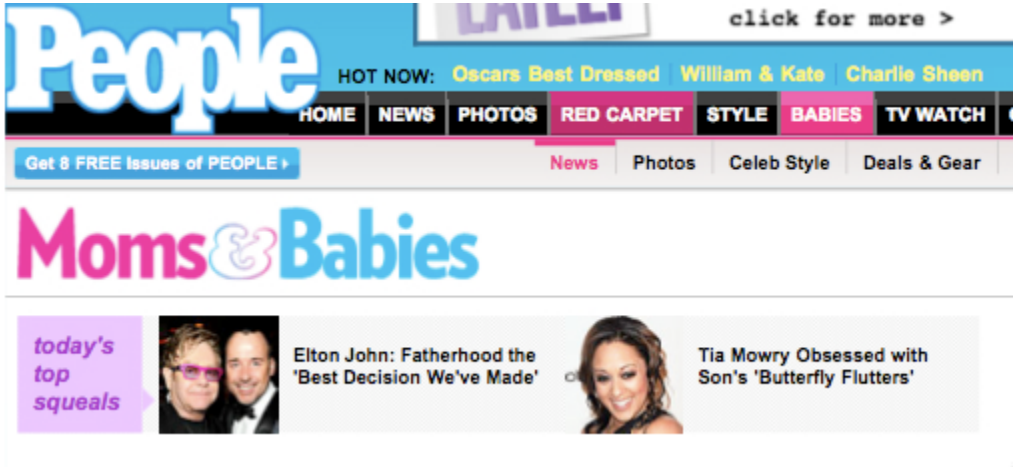
OK! Magazine, February 2008
Source: "Cover Story: Is Katie Pregnant?"

The voyeuristic, collective nature of the Web also invites social networking through what has become known as the "celebrity bump watch," a sweeping public interest in the possible convexity of female celebrities' bellies. This fascination with celebrity pregnancy, such that the media on- and off-line are staked out and poised with cameras on women's bellies in the hopes of seeing something that might suggest an active womb, further complicates the cultural construction of unmotherhood.

In the image of Katie Holmes, for instance, more than three-quarters of the cover of *OK! Magazine* is devoted to the possible pregnancies of two closely watched celebrities. In the case of Angelina Jolie, the magazine draws the gaze immediately to her abdomen, tempting readers to watch the growth of her belly as if they knew her. In the case of

Holmes, the magazine attempts to assign motherhood to her based on a nominal weight gain and a delicate shadowing that might reveal a three-dimensional low belly.

In the online versions of these celebrity gossip publications, such images inspire storms of speculation from everyday readers. *OK!*'s website readers are invited to "leave a comment" and fire up discussion about the wombs of these women. On a grander scale, *People.com* now has a *Celebrity Baby Blog* entirely devoted to news about the pregnancies and progeny of famous people where fans can post their responses to such news. For example, when the site posted photos of Katherine Heigl, Josh Kelly, and their newly adopted daughter from Korea, the discussion board had 250 comments from viewers within six hours, including "What a beautiful baby. It kinda makes me not dislike her as much as I did," "Motherhood looks good on Katherine!" and "Those pictures made my day." These comments not only stir social networking among viewers, but they also create an illusion that viewers are actually social networking with the celebrities, sharing together in the experience of motherhood.



The Home Page of People.com's "Moms & Babies."

Source: "Moms & Babies

In the plethora of rumors and photos and "is she or isn't she?" intrigue, there is an implied literacy, a specialized way of reading, embedded in these images and texts: such media has created a kind of coding system, a series of signs that have become common to mainstream culture. We know now to look for "the bump," to watch for subtle weight gain, to pay

attention to the denial of pregnancy rumors, and to await the first pictures of the newborns and their parents on the cover of *People*. Tied up in this language of motherhood is the familiar rhetoric of its extraordinary bliss, as creators spotlight such "Top News" and "Hot Stories" headlines as "Jennie Garth 'Reveling' in Closeness with Daughters," "Jennifer Hudson Calls Motherhood the 'Best Feeling in the World,'" and "Keisha Castle-Hughes [age 19] Finds Young Motherhood a Blessing" ("Archive"). This language invites the general public into an exciting sleuthing and unveiling of pregnancy, and it appeals to assumptions about a universal emotional attraction to childbearing that signifies joy, renewal, the personal fulfillment of shared experience.

On many levels, however, the portrayal of celebrity motherhood is worth a critical look. In their book *The Mommy Myth*, Susan Douglas and Meredith Michaels argue in a chapter titled "Attack of the Celebrity Moms":

> Rising out of the ashes of feminism, and repudiating its critique of the narrow confines of middle-class motherhood, the celebrity mom profile was an absolutely crucial tool in the media construction of maternal guilt and insecurity, as well as the romanticizing of motherhood, in the 1980s and beyond. (113)

"Beyond" is right, as the singular spotlight on the "celebrity profile" has grown multifold into a veritable online hunt for motherhood among famous women. This obsession with celebrity makes problematic an image of motherhood that is already teeming with anxieties. Whether or not they believe that their contributions will be read by these celebrity moms, women who fuel these online discussions are contributing to a conversation that continues to churn and thicken the rhetoric of mothering as a universally desired experience. Indeed, it might redeem the choices of unmothers if these online media continued to celebrate the professional and community accomplishments of celebrity mothers, but the media's representation of them suggests that their previous accomplishments pale in comparison to the undertaking of their new mother identities.

Keep looking for the love of your life, and freeze your eggs while you still can.

The comments that are posted in response to these online narratives, such as those mentioned above, continue a conversation that keeps unmothers in the margin. In the extreme visibility of the mother, the unmother doesn't just fall away—she is negated from the mainstream. Unless, of course, you're Jennifer Aniston, in which case you might become a poster child for unmothering without your consent. The website *Babble.com*, which aims "to explore the world of parenting on a daily basis with ruthless honesty, and with the humor and lyricism natural to the subject," published a "Getting Pregnant" special issue in the Summer of 2010. In this issue, Rachel Leighmann-Haupt, author of the book *In Her Own Sweet Time: Unexpected Adventures in Finding Love, Commitment, and Motherhood*, includes a piece called "The Aniston Syndrome: What Happens When Women Wait Too Long to Have a Baby?" In her article, Leighmann-Haupt discusses the female paradox of wanting to have "it all" but taking too long to have it while the fertility clock ticks away and "procreative power" wanes (a.k.a. "The Aniston Syndrome").

Jennifer Aniston Source: Chesi-Fotos CC, flickr

She makes two main points: she lauds women who have taken a longer road toward finding real, sustainable love and career choices on the route to motherhood, and she urges these "older" women to use all of the resources they can to find out what their reproductive options are. However, while she may offer consolation and even empowerment to women who fear that their babymaking days are over, Leighmann-Haupt makes a pathology out of Aniston's childlessness. She shows no proof that she knows anything about the actress's deliberations about becoming a mother or not, yet she seals the actress's fate. To her female readers, Leighmann-Haupt offers a subtext: keep looking for the love of your life, and freeze

your eggs while you still can. Progressive as her language may seem, she's still pushing a traditional female role—partnered and (eventually) mothering—and alienating unmotherhood.

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PART IV

A Cyber (Un)Mommy War

I realize as I write that the motherhood story has many chapters. There is, of course, the most famous one of all: that motherhood itself is not recognized for its challenges, sacrifices, and importance. We cannot neglect the very real possibility that the swarm of pro-mothering rhetoric on- and off-line is in response to centuries of oppression that have relegated women to mothering and only mothering; and when those forces have pigeon-holed women in this way, they have not celebrated the role. In her book *The Price of Motherhood: Why the Most Important Job in the World is Still the Least Valued*, Ann Crittenden argues, "The illusion is that working with small children is an innate predisposition of women—or at least some women—so there is no need to place much value on it" (203). As a new mother, I appreciate that Crittenden and many, many others have championed the unrecognized value in it: the raw physical challenge of pregnancy, the visceral and painful realities of feeling and watching my body birth my daughter, and the indescribable ache that is always bubbling beneath the profound love I have for her—this is difficult, fulfilling, extraordinary stuff.

Where does that leave the woman who has chosen not to take on this role?

But so is running a marathon, or toiling over the composition of a book, or rebuilding a neighborhood, or nursing a partner or parent. So is teaching, doctoring, serving, digging, designing. And yet, while her cause is a critical one, the very title of Crittenden's book is problematic and repeated over and over in online social networking sites for mothering. While such language used by the sites may honor the life goals of women who have chosen motherhood, its diction constitutes the unmother as one whose life will fall short, regardless of other exceptional feats she may accomplish. If, to use the words of Crittenden, mothering is the "most important job in the world," where does that leave the woman who has chosen not to take on this role? Are her other choices simply second-rate and not as useful to society?

This is not a new question. In her 1976 book *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, Adrienne Rich examined the empowerment and the shackles of motherhood as an unexamined cultural construct and challenged the cultural parameters of mothering:

> Unexamined assumptions: First, that a "natural" mother is a person without further identity, one who can find her chief gratification in being all day with small children, living at a pace tuned to theirs… that maternal love is, and should be, quite literally selfless... If I knew parts of myself existed that would never cohere to those images, weren't those parts then abnormal, monstrous? (22-23)

Rich's inquiry into the possibility of possessing "abnormal" or "monstrous" qualities not at all connected to mothering is answered by Malinowitz, who discusses unmotherhood as a specific kind of "lack": "Not a lack of *having*, but rather one of *wanting*." Not wanting to bear children, she argues, is "frequently perceived as twisted, deviant, or, at the very least, insufficiently developed, dumbly unwilling to participate in its own rescue" (32-33). In a word: abnormal. Monstrous.

The rhetoric of social networking sites for mothers serves to perpetuate this perception of the unmother as aberrant. In response, communities of unmothers (though *much* less visible to the mainstream than those of mothers) have rallied around the Web in the last several years to find their own validation. Sites like *childfree.net*, *Happily Childfree*, and *The Childfree Life* celebrate the choice not to parent, and provide their own blogs, humor pages, dating services, and even t-shirts.

Source: "The Childfree Life"

Certainly, the cutting rhetoric of their word choice—"childfree" = free of children, as if having children indicated a lack of freedom—and the mudslinging against mothers that takes place on the discussion boards, as Malinowitz illustrates, is not to be taken lightly. *The Childfree Life*, for example, uses this prickly subtitle for its site: "A Safe Haven in a Baby-Crazed World." But we might consider the aggressive nature of these sites as evidence for the lack of accountability taken by those who have oppressed the sites' creators. *Happily Childfree* explains to its readers:

> Making this choice is not an easy road to travel. It means having the courage to be different from most everyone else you know. You'll have to write your own life script, since the traditional one doesn't apply to you. You have to be strong, as you may face a lot of social stigma. Your family and friends might try to convince you to have kids—and if that doesn't work, they might try to belittle you into it. ("The Childfree Choice")

The stakes are high for the unmother. And while such social networking sites may support her, they may be no match for the face-to-face discrimination that will meet her offline.

I am gravely concerned about the breeding (to use an apt metaphor) of oppression online and its offline consequences. We have a complex chain of marginalization that manifests itself as a cyber war. Mothers are oppressed, mothers oppress one another in the “Mommy Wars” (working moms vs. stay-at-home moms), mothers oppress unmothers, and unmothers fight back (sometimes in dirty ways). While Aristotle defends our use of words over weapons, what results is, as Malinowitz argues, a “short cut toward ‘validation’” that is a bad idea and a step backward for feminism. While we should be “analyzing and redressing the collectively damaging idea that each condition—motherhood and unmotherhood—profoundly negates the other” (32), we are creating and recreating a terrible divisiveness among women online, offering less and less of a peaceful understanding in the physical realm.

We are creating and recreating a terrible divisiveness among women online.

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PART V

The Question of Solidarity

In her online article, “Motherhoods: Feminist Solidarity and Fear Rhetoric,” Jessica Restaino offers a critique of media that incite fear in the hearts of mothers: fear of illness, of mothering poorly, of not losing pregnancy weight, of child deaths. She writes:

Popular motherhood magazines work against a feminist commitment to difference, advocating instead for a motherhood driven by fear, perfectionism, and insecurity. We need a new rhetoric of motherhoods, one that is about diverse maternal experiences and that relies on a language of acceptance and security.

Restaino’s plea is important, and her phrase “a new rhetoric of motherhood” captures what I hope to offer here in this text—but Restaino’s use of the phrase falls short of its potential mission. She gives a nod to unmothers when she claims, “As long as we choose feigned reality and a totalizing rhetoric of motherhood, we have not—as feminists, mothers or not—sustained solidarity,” but she does not stand by unmothers long enough to thoughtfully address them. Most glaringly, she references Malinowitz’s “Unmotherhood” article as an important voice in the resistance she longs for, but she mistakes it for an article about “mothering and the work of academia” rather than about unmothering. This is a missed opportunity to recognize Malinowitz’s work as a critical component in the conversation that must take place between “feminists, mothers or not” before solidarity can happen.

This protection may begin with revising the language that signifies motherhood.

And yet, Restaino's work is a beginning, for the disparagement of the unmother and the continued aggravation of her status online complicates and begs the question of solidarity. Arabella Lyon imagines a solidarity in which "mother and unmother [are] both to be conceived as engaged in alterity and fully ethical in life" (703). But with decades of feminism behind the mother and the value of her work, who is to defend the unmother and the value of her choices? Restaino seems to be asking unmothers to protect mothers from the culture of fear that consumes them. Can unmothers count on the same protection—indeed, the nurturing—from mothers?

Letting go of the superlative, I argue, may nudge us a step closer to liberating the cultural construction of motherhood from its narrow views of women.

This protection may begin with revising the language that signifies motherhood. The story of Peter Pan and Wendy is a clear example of how rhetoric can get stuck in a meta-narrative loop. Peter, who symbolizes a universal need for parenting, will never grow up; and Wendy, who symbolizes the mother-to-be, will be created and recreated to mother Peter. That story won't change. Online, however, we can re-imagine the kind of rhetoric that stimulates and brings mothers together—the words, the images.

We might take a page from *Mombian*'s book, for instance: the site states on its "About" page that it supports "the belief that mothers don't lose their other interests the moment they become parents." While it doesn't speak directly to those who have chosen not to parent, it is a statement that makes some room for the possibility that a woman can be whole before having children, and even without them. Ours is not to dismantle or threaten online communities that serve to support mothers and mothering, for these online spaces are critical to the continued recognition of the challenges and joys of raising children. Rather, we might think more broadly about sensitizing such communities to the messages they send to those who have made the mindful choice not to raise children. Is something lost in the articulation of motherhood as one of the most important achievements in life? We might ask, instead, what might be gained? Letting go of the superlative, I

argue, may nudge us a step closer to liberating the cultural construction of motherhood from its narrow views of women. It may also help to nurture a new kind of solidarity, one that embraces a broader definition of progeny that celebrates the remarkable work birthed by all kinds of women, those who choose and choose not to mother.

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In several short decades, computers have moved into the heart of our homes and lives. As mom to two older teenage girls, I have been intrigued by the question of how mother-daughter relationships have changed because of relentless internet connection. To begin answering this, I combined my experiences with responses provided by four other mother-daughter pairs. What surprised me most? Moms of my generation believe we are closer to our daughters than we were as teens to our own mothers, yet our daughters unsettle this by choosing anyone-but-mom as confidante. Not that they are internet addicted — they value friends, books, and TV as other windows on the world. Together in using technology more and more, mothers and daughters are growing resilient cyborg skins.
