

# La maternidad como territorio de investigación y creación\*

Motherhood as Research and Creative Territory // A maternidade como território de pesquisa e criação

## Mathilde Perahia<sup>1</sup>

PhD en Humanités Pôle Culture Cirque  
Associate researcher at Artes, laboratoire  
des arts de l'Université de Bordeaux Montaigne  
perahiamathilde@gmail.com

Fecha de recepción: 9 de septiembre de 2024.

Fecha de aceptación: 28 de octubre de 2024



Perahia M.,(2025)La maternidad como territorio de investigación y creación. *Corpo Grafías Estudios críticos de y desde los cuerpos*, 12(12), pp. 22-37.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14483/25909398.22666>

---

### \* Artículo de reflexión

<sup>1</sup> Mathilde Perahia holds a PhD from Concordia University in Montreal. In her thesis published in 2021, she used concepts inspired by queer thinking to offer new perspectives on a number of circus performances. As an independent researcher and creator, she publishes work on circus artistic approaches outside the mainstream in Quebec and elsewhere, exploring the evolution of circus writing and aesthetics and their capacity to provoke a change in the relationship to the world. In this context of philosophical and physical explorations, her recent experience of motherhood has led her to a research-creation in circus on the theme of being a mother.

## Resumen

La maternidad nos transforma, nos hibrida, nos conecta, nos reorienta, nos dispersa. A veces excluida del mundo social, la madre está, sin embargo, en su centro o en sus intersticios. La madre es híbrida y múltiple. La experiencia de la maternidad es un viaje que nos enlaza con lo universal, con la noche de los tiempos que teje el hilo de todos los úteros antiguos y futuros, así como una experiencia profundamente íntima que nos sacude en cada momento. Al atravesar esta experiencia física extrema y fascinante, ¿cómo cambia nuestra percepción del mundo? ¿Qué nuevo conocimiento somático genera? Esta es una reflexión creativa sobre la maternidad, sobre nuestra maternidad como investigadoras y creadoras. Es un espacio donde necesitamos experimentar el arte y la creación atravesados por la maternidad. La maternidad como un territorio político y reflexivo.

Esta investigación-creación multifacética es una búsqueda íntima tanto como una investigación exhaustiva. Presentando una exploración de escritos feministas en perspectiva de la teoría queer, alimentada por testimonios sobre la maternidad, la reflexión se desarrolla junto a nuestras investigaciones creativas. Esperamos abrir un espacio de pensamiento, creación y compartición.

## Palabras clave

Circo, queer, feminista, maternidad, somático, transformación

## Abstract

Motherhood transforms us, hybridizes us, connects us, refocuses us, and scatters us. Sometimes excluded from the social world, the mother is nevertheless at its center or its interstices. The mother is both hybrid and multiple. The experience of maternity is a journey that links us to the universal, to the night of times that weaves the thread of all the ancient and future wombs as much as it is a deeply intimate experience that shakes us at every

moment. As we go through this extreme and fascinating physical experience, how does it change our experience of the world? What new somatic knowledge does it generate? This is a creative reflection on motherhood, on our maternity as researchers and creators. It is a space where we need to experience art and creation intersected by motherhood; motherhood as a political and reflective territory.

This multifaceted research-creation is an intimate quest as it is a thorough investigation. Presenting an exploration of feminist writings put into perspective of queer theory, feeding off testimonies on maternity, the reflection unfolds alongside our creative investigations in the hope to open a new space of thinking, creating, and sharing.

## Keywords

Circus, queer, feminist, motherhood, somatic, transformation

## Resumo

A maternidade nos transforma, nos hibrida, nos conecta, nos reorienta, nos dispersa. Às vezes excluída do mundo social, a mãe está, no entanto, no seu centro ou em seus interstícios. A mãe é híbrida e múltipla. A experiência da maternidade é uma jornada que nos liga ao universal, à noite dos tempos que tece o fio de todos os úteros antigos e futuros, assim como é uma experiência profundamente íntima que nos abala a cada momento. Ao atravessarmos essa experiência física extrema e fascinante, como ela muda nossa percepção do mundo? Que novo conhecimento somático ela gera? Esta é uma reflexão criativa sobre a maternidade, sobre nossa maternidade como pesquisadoras e criadoras. É um espaço onde precisamos experimentar a arte e a criação atravessadas pela maternidade. A maternidade como um território político e reflexivo.

Esta pesquisa-criação multifacetada é uma busca íntima tanto quanto uma investigação minuciosa. Apresentando uma exploração de escritos feministas colocados em perspectiva da teoria queer, alimentada por testemunhos sobre a maternidade, a reflexão se desenrola ao lado de nossas investigações criativas. Esperamos abrir um espaço de pensamento, criação e compartilhamento

### **Palavras-chave**

Circo, queer, feminista, maternidade, somático, transformación

*Un huracán atravesó mi cuerpo de un extremo al otro. Mi cuerpo se lo recuerda. Recuerda la excitación de la liberación cuando se sintieron las primeras primicias. De la danza nocturna, invadida por ondas de dolor extremas que se extendían desde la célula más diminuta hasta las paredes de la habitación que nos albergaba. Aún siento en mis tejidos y órganos ese estado brumoso que duró 23 horas, completamente desconectada del resto del mundo, centrada en una misión de la que solo había una salida posible. Fugas de líquidos. Gritos. Olores. Aullidos. Sangre. Desbordamientos. Rendición. También ponerse en acción. Sacudida más allá de mis límites y de cualquier referencia. Las sensaciones físicas habían tomado el control total de mi ser. No quedaba nada de mi yo social. (Re)convertida en animal por un día. Luego, convertirme en madre.*

### **Introduction**

This article is based on a presentation I delivered at the *Circus And its Others IV* symposium in Bogota in March 2024. It takes root in my own personal experience, put into a framework of conceptual principles inspired by queer thinking, as developed in my PhD thesis. It also stems from an encounter. In the fall of 2022, in Montreal,

I met Javiera, a Chilean mother artist, performer, and dramaturge. Both of us had started reading-writing-creating about our experiences of motherhood. We engaged in a friendly yet serious conversation about our physical and social, intimate and political experience of being mothers, its effects on and implications for creative practices, processes, and communities for us, those found within the circus arts. We accompanied each other on our journey of transformation as mothers, artists, and researchers. Simultaneously, I embarked on a creative journey in a circus alongside two mother artists. This reflection brings together readings, encounters, exchanges, and cooperation with other mother artists and mother researchers, serving as an invitation to think and create from the body of the mother. The pieces of text in italics are either literal excerpts from my conversation with Javiera or from my diary of motherhood. I also share parts of my creative endeavor as an example of putting my considerations into action.

In the last few months, as I was writing my PhD thesis while pregnant and as my baby was moving inside of me, the concepts I was developing in my research took a radically different light. Supported by queer philosophy, I had put forward in my work the concept of “in-between,” a place of passage, of everlasting transformation, within the body, which could be fertile territory to think outside the idea of a norm where things are separated, compartmentalized, and rather fixed. I analyzed specific circus performances through the lens of this concept, linking performative form and content and holding the belief that performance can bring social change. Being pregnant gave the concept of “in-between” a whole new dimension, which survived as I became a mother. Pregnancy is the ultimate experience of the body. This bodily transformation is also psychic and social. Abruptly, we enter another realm. Between here and there, inside, in the very depths of instinct, and in a metaphysical dimension that surpasses us. Connected



Photo Helena Valès.

by a taut thread between our bodies and our offspring, in a constant state of alert, linked to ancient times and death. We are a transitional territory, in search of balance, scattered in a multiplicity of selves, navigating between our irreconcilable fragments, overflowing with love, reinventing ourselves every minute in relation to this other who reshapes us. This child is now between us and the world, and we are the bridge that allows them to access it. I had become an in-between space, a territory of passage that I experienced to be sensorial and conceptual material for a change in perspective. I felt that it was a physical and spiritual experience that, as it changed me as a human being, forced me to re-evaluate who I was as an actor in this world and, more specifically, as a researcher and as a creator.

Indeed, oftentimes we think of maternity in terms of what we lost in our social and creative life, with the idea of mourning, how about we look at what we gained and what it can contribute to? I decided to use such a trivial yet extreme adventure of motherhood, above all a physical one in the early years, as the potential to reconsider how things are done, how things are thought, and how things are created, from this new place.

### **Thinking Motherhood: a revolution**

*It is such a common body, yet it is considered other, the minority.*

*It is extreme and trivial. A body that goes back to zero, allowing a new encounter, a second chance. Available. Unavailable. A body shelter, that heals, protects, has it all, is enough. A place of struggle and a place of power.*

The Canadian author Nancy Houston has written some of her major works from the perspective of being a mother. In *Journal de la Creation* (1990), she tells us that women create from their bodies, from a very physical place, while men have long claimed the more intellectual and spiritual dimension of creativity. She argues that the reason why men have kept a hand over the intellect throughout the years, especially in the arts, is that it is their way of compensating for their physical limitation to access immortality. Hence, she warns us that within the hassle to gain legitimacy in the intellectual world if mother artists keep ignoring their specific experience and knowledge of the physical world through their maternity, feminist claims will leave out an important part of the struggle and aspirations to change perspectives, values, and ways of doing things. She calls upon a phenomenological posture by which one of the fathers of this philosophical approach, Maurice Merleau-Ponty brought forward the idea that the body is both object and subject thereby giving us agency to engage through it and from it.

*Un cuerpo compartido. Un cuerpo  
que cuenta con otras voces.  
Con una memoria que despertó en algún  
lugar. Expandido. Atravesado. Invadido.  
(Javiera Osorio Ghigliotto, 2022)*

Motherhood has only recently begun to qualify as a legitimate subject of reflection. Historically ignored in philosophy, it has been neglected and considered a shallow topic with limited potential for shedding light on existential human issues. Purely physical, obviously instinctive, unquestioned, sometimes disgusting, source of alienation even. What was there to say? Wasn't it the exact opposite of what the intellect stood for? However, in the past twenty years, things have been changing in all disciplines, with a surge of interest in recent years. French philosopher Camille Froidevaux-Metterie has

dedicated her research to the studying of and writing about the experience of being a woman and especially a mother. *Un si gros ventre* (2023) explores the personal, social, and political stakes of carrying a life inside oneself. *Un corps à soi* (2021) brings back motherhood at the center of the feminist discourse, offering it a different light. Reinterpreting Simone de Beauvoir's writings by providing some context and perspective, she opens a new feminist way into motherhood through our capacity to make choices and the recognition of the multiplicity of perspectives this experience gives rise to. Froidevaux-Metterie is not the only one to have embraced this topic in recent years, and I can also mention Maggie Nelson, Martine Delvaux, and countless other literature pieces and podcasts that have been part of my journey and infuse the subtext.

After providing the safety of the womb and experiencing the power of delivery, the mother is revealed in the daily care. Becoming a mother means offering a passage and establishing a bond. It is a fusion but also a tearing of oneself in individuality: from now on, we will be connected by a cord that was not enough to cut at birth. During pregnancy, the mother extends into the child's body, and once born, the child extends, for a time, into the mother's body. The mother's body remains a refuge, it remains the protective womb. Being a mother means having woven this bond between us and forming something new with the three of us. My child makes me someone else: the mother I become is a different person, a new version of myself, with the role of helping him become himself in his individuality. It is moving towards, together, a co-construction for the rest of our lives. Just as he did in my womb, he continues to draw from me, to nourish himself from me, first from my milk, which is produced and adapted to his needs, then from my incessant care, my gaze, my voice, my touch, my trust, and my support. He fills himself with me as much as he



Photo Geneviève Robitaille, "Les déesses qui fuient" creation in progress- Elise Leblanc, Mathilde Perahia, Geneviève Robitaille

gives back to me, and thus he reshapes me, giving me a new form. He pulls here, chips away, or patches there. I am the bridge he crosses to reach others, to reach the world. After having been in his womb, I am the in-between of him and the rest of the world, his passage to make a place for himself. The rites of passage preceding welcome express, surround, reinforce, and rhythm this sacred experience, and then transform into the rituals of habit.

*Si dejamos de mantenerlo oculto,  
convirtámoslo en una oportunidad.  
(Javiera Osorio Ghigliotto, 2022)*

As we recognize the complete experience of being a woman as unequal to that of men, it also becomes impossible to ignore that motherhood, becoming a mother, marks a shift in a woman's life and has a social

impact that should be given some voice, some space, and some power of action. In this case, what matters most to us is within the arts, through the arts.

*Dejarse tocar por la maternidad, dejarse  
atravesar y cambiar por ella como pensadores  
y creadores. La maternidad como territorio  
creativo y oportunidad de cambio. La maternidad  
como territorio político y de reflexión.  
(Javiera Osorio Ghigliotto, 2022)*

A conversation for the circus but also society as a whole that has only recently begun to arise.

## **Mothering: infuse change from our bodies of mothers**

As bizarre as this may seem, I find my experience of motherhood to resonate with queer philosophy, as it brings solace and light to this deep transformational journey. In the queer philosophical stance, improvising is an act of rebellion, and foolishness actually represents the ability to wipe the slate clean and therefore reinvent oneself; “[u]nder certain circumstances failing, losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming, not knowing may, in fact, offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world” (Halberstam 2011, p. 2). Failure, vulnerability, inefficiency, forgetting, and lack of logic thus become new creative resources for a counter-society project.

What is motherhood if not a constraint in which one must reinvent life to transform it into renewed (and creative) material? This body exists in relation to the child, as well as to the object, this body serves as a playground, propelled into a new somatic device, this body is constrained as much as it enables us to create amplitude within ourselves and in the world. We must make space for ourselves differently. It is a call to use the forces of imagination to open new worlds:

Practicing educated hope, participating in a mode of revolutionary consciousness, is not simply conforming to one group’s doxa at the expense of another’s. Practicing educated hope is the enactment of a critique function. It is not about announcing the way things ought to be, but, instead, imagining what things could be. It is thinking beyond the narrative of what stands for the world today by seeing it as not enough. (Muñoz 2009, p. 278)

This is about inventing new territories of thought, about unformatting oneself and setting oneself in motion. It involves shedding fixed identities and rejecting linear progressions. Isn’t it what becoming a mother, a parent, lead you to do?

*Es el poder transformarse constantemente. Por el camino de la maternidad vamos descubriendo, abiertas, no nos define, sino que al contrario es un cambio infinito. Y antes no lo sabía, no sentía el cambio y la transformación tan fuertemente.*  
(Javiera Osorio Ghigliotto, 2022)

Pregnant, you are full, you are more. Then, you empty out. Inside, it is empty, soft— everything has been disturbed. Since becoming a mother, I feel both more and less than before. Always tethered to “something” outside of me, a part of me has been externalized, taken from the inside, and removed forever. I, therefore, exist more in the world, but I also exist less because when that part of me is absent, I feel a void, as if a part of me is missing. Free but also disconnected. Between worlds, states, identities, and times everywhere all the time. Long after the reclamation of our bodies, they will forever carry these passages; they will always be a threshold, a gap between worlds and in space-time.

Thinking beyond a linear and vertical view of transmission and identity construction, gender, and our relationship to the body involves integrating the potential for multiple and concurrent influences into our understanding of the world. It means seeing this multiplicity as an opportunity, as the foundation for a greater capacity to act, better expressed by the term agency. Allowing oneself to be traversed and touched in return. Thinking in the blur, in the in-between, means accepting doubts, the hybrid singularities of a multiple and not uniform or predictable world. It is to contemplate transitions, to welcome

the unclassifiable that changes and challenges our reference points, our value criteria, and our systems of legitimization. It is “to abstract oneself from the impulse for immediate understanding” (Plana, 2018, p. 45).

*La maternidad, como lo que Rebeca Solnit describe en A field guide to getting lost, un ensayo sobre rutas, viajes y haberse perdido, es cruzar un bosque oscuro y encontrar ciertas luces y la incertidumbre.*  
(Javiera Osorio Ghigliotto, 2022)

Like Judith Butler before him, in her book *Bodies that Matter* (1988), trans philosopher Paul B. Preciado (2019b) invites us to shift our perspective and view from the most vulnerable—those who are rendered invisible and marginalized in discourse, in public space,

and therefore absent from thought. For, through these multiple experiences of the body, it is possible to learn to desire differently, collectively, and thus to inspire societal change. To desire models beyond the regimes of oppression that act on bodies, from their aesthetics to their sensitive expression. Like Butler, Preciado calls for desiring differently, by loving beyond conventions, creating counter-rituals, and invoking another performative. Here, loving can be understood as sensing the world, and being in relation to it. The struggle of bodies today is intersectional and permeates all current battles, including racial, anti-colonial, and ecological struggles. Preciado (2019b) explains that it also involves undertaking a form of social revolution by desexualizing our relationship to power and erotizing our relationship to the planet, recreating the connection with it, while the trend has been to convince us that we are outside nature.

Could Muñoz's horizon, this fantasized elsewhere, also be found in the radical multiplicity of desires and bodies,



Photo Helena Valès Residency "Les déesses qui fuient" Mathilde Perahia



Photo Cassandre Chatonnier. "Les déesses qui fuient" creation in progress- Mathilde Perahia, Geneviève Robitaille



forms of life, practices, and sensibilities? I believe that through our daily behaviors as mothers and parents, it is possible to “resist the violence of hegemonic performativity, but above all, to imagine dissident theaters where the production of another performative force is possible.” (Munoz, 2009, p. 180) Starting from this new experience of the world, how can our circus practices and aesthetics also serve this posture? How can our experience of motherhood, or even parenthood, be an inspiration, a starting point for inventing a “new scene of enunciation” referencing Jacques Rancière (Preciado, 2019a) in the world of the arts and more broadly in the world?

My body is a playground every day. I am his refuge when he is frightened. He clings to me with its tiny fist, wrapping his legs tightly around my waist. To climb, he doesn't hesitate to use my breast as a handhold. he buries its head between my breast and my armpit. From there, he can observe better; I am his control tower. He jumps on my belly-trampoline. I was his home, I am his playground, his sanctuary. He doesn't even call me “mama,” although he constantly asks where his dad is. That's normal; his dad is here or there, while I accompany his everywhere all the time. I am between him and the world, so his doesn't need to name me.

### **Creating and mothering: a challenge and an opportunity**

Creating as a mother is a struggle between the desire to make space outside of motherhood for creation, going back to the old self, and at the same time the incompressible need to incorporate it and use it as an opportunity to make the changes that will make creation and life more coherent with the new state and status. A constant tear. A place of conflict.

*Mirar el cambio con amabilidad nos puede volver mejores humanxs y creadores, creadoras  
Create with more kindness. Asumir que no tienes que funcionar como eras antes. El confiar que el proceso tiene su propia vida.  
(Javiera Osorio Ghigliotto, 2022)*

However, there is a necessity, an urge to write, create, and name. As our experience of the world is changing so fast, creativity is amplified. Creating instead of resting. Creating while nursing, while putting to sleep, while rocking. Creation is an escape, a breath, a liberating space from maternity, a way out to reconnect to the old self. Invite action through art.

*Hay un desafío de crear con una energía más caótica, más desparramada. Es un lugar de contradicción grande cuando eres madre : una fuerza creativa grande y el cansancio físico y emocional.  
La creación viene también como necesidad de conexión.  
(Javiera Osorio Ghigliotto, 2022)*

There is a desire to embrace the situated discourse. To accept what is there now. To receive with attention and care, not longing for perfection but rather the doing in authenticity; doing and sharing.

*En transformar tu cuerpo, transformas tu forma de ver, de crear. Los dos, maternidad y circos son territorios de transformación.  
(Javiera Osorio Ghigliotto, 2022)*

Motherhood redefines risk by constantly facing the assessment of risk in every action, gesture, and word. New consideration for the risk we take; the same risks have different consequences, and new risks arise. How can those considerations be part of a new practice?



Photo Helena Valès. "Les déesses qui fuient" creation in progress- Elise Leblanc, Mathilde Perahia, Geneviève Robitaille

Circus practice has nourished who I am as a mother. Being a mother feeds itself on intuition, trust, spontaneity, community, humility, hope, and on holding space. What is the stand of circus today? Mothering is about accept and conciliate. What new terms for this conciliation?

As mothers there is a longing for more collaborations, more community. We are stronger together. Like soil, like earth, we can only find a healthy balance together. How does that translate within circus practices?

### **Bringing motherhood inside the studio: initiate new desire pathways**

For the past year, I have been cocreating an interdisciplinary neo-circus piece exploring the physical experience of maternity, alongside two wonderful, talented, and

inspiring mother-artists. This artistic project involves a philosophical, epistemological, and practical reflection on our experience of mothers. The whole research-creation process is a personal and collective journey. We want to propose a new posture in creating.

*Transformar el sentimiento de ser menos aptas en nuevas oportunidades de crear, de proponer otros cuerpos.*  
(Javiera Osorio Ghigliotto 2022)

Our collective is called *Les Furtives*. *Les furtifs* were imagined in an eponym book by Alain Damasio, French philosopher and author of political anticipation fictions. They are beings who constantly transform themselves to adapt to their context, who resist by flying under the radar, establishing themselves in the interstices,

forcing freedom in the cracks, to avoid detection but also as solutions to survive gently and harmoniously in a changing world. For me, we mothers are furtives.

During our first two research residencies, we began a collective writing process based on trust and intuition. We explored our experiences as mother-women-artists. From oral responses in movement, without dialogue, emerged dramaturgical, physical, and visual material.

*Energía creativa materna mas introspectiva, quedarse y darle tiempo de procesar.*  
(Javiera Osorio Ghigliotto, 2022)

This process allowed us to bring together our intimacies, our bodies, and our imaginations. Thus, the piece gives significant space to a physical and inhabited scenography, in a slightly offbeat universe, which offers us the possibility to address everything—from the beautiful to the very personal or even the unmentionable.

To recount the experiences of motherhood, we deploy the metaphorical scope of circus and its ability to experience the world differently by creating new physical situations through bodies that are in relation to material, objects, and stage devices. As said earlier, we develop a process based on active listening rather than discussion. When actively listening, we are not in a posture that seeks to respond or to promote the self. Each sharing enters the space and inhabits it. Actively or in a more quiet manner, consciously or informally, they will subtly contribute to nourishing us, to building the next steps of our creation, our lives, and the world.

*Hay una desorientación con el cuerpo que muta que te propulsa en un lugar de escuchar de receptividad amplia. Mas suave. A veces quedarse más calladita, llevando más ternura. Crear desde el oculo, la oscuridad*

*algo que emerge desde lo profundo. Having given birth gives you access to a certain wildness and a permission to go there. Untouchable. Atreverse con cuidado.*  
(Javiera Osorio Ghigliotto, 2022)

Creating a safe container for work means moving at each person's pace. On the second day, only then, did our bodies come into contact, and just like a flash, the desire to carry each other emerged: to embody the weight that we carry on our shoulders, but also to hold each other as mothers.

Integrating motherhood into the creative workspace means bringing in the multiplicity of identities and states, without dividing or amputating any part of who we are. It represents a broader discourse on the various spaces we enter that often require us to compartmentalize ourselves.

Moreover, by deciding to work only with mothers, we give ourselves and them a place in the artistic world that they don't always receive. This involves adapting work methods: working in shorter, less intensive, but more frequent periods, being flexible regarding the presence of babies and young children, accepting more unpredictability, and considering variable availability and unavailability. However, we believe that by embracing these different modalities we also pave the way for changes in practices and infuse a new type of creativity marked by a new way of being and acting in the world.

With our bodies of the in-between, we open towards a writing of the in-between: between words (testimonies) and the body (memory and reincarnation), between words and the devices that bring words to life, between the self and others, between creation, scientific research (creation of knowledge in terms of writing, discourse, and archives on motherhood), and mediation. The laboratory



Photo Camille Havas. Residency "Les déesses qui fuient" Mathilde Perahia, Geneviève Robitaille

aspect and mediation with our community audience have been conceived and integrated from the outset of our research, emerging on the very first days. We are not alone in this research, we carry community.

In the process, we are open to creating beyond traditional spaces. What interests us is imagining meaningful collaborations that give meaning to our project. We expose ourselves to explore rather than create in a black box. It is a process of liberating our socialized bodies, and our powers, without shame, with humility but without apologizing. We conducted physical research stages in spaces not dedicated to artistic creation: in a store dedicated to materials and services related to perinatality. Within the birthing center itself, we immersed ourselves in our pregnancies and births in those places, welcomed

by the staff, those women who cared for us, but also in the context of future mothers. We embody for ourselves and for others. It is a process by echoes, where a movement of our bodies becomes a wave of sisterhood, making space for new physical empowerments.

The piece is really about transformation, mutation, metamorphosis. We share a body whose borders are undefined, a body that's invaded, porous, unavailable but also constantly at disposal, a powerful and vulnerable body. The weight. Holding and being held. We talk about sorority, about building nets and support. How catching and supporting each other. Of transmission and death. Love. Creativity in every little act that's made.



Photo Helena Valès

## Touch

There is no conclusion to this reflection, in the sense of an ending or a final say. However, to close this text, I would like to link motherhood, *la maternidad*, to touch. Being touched and touching in all the senses of the word, and all of what it carries of vulnerability and intimacy but also as a place of power and a potential for change.

Jean Birnbaum in his essay *Seuls les enfants changent le monde* (2023) (*Only children can Change the World*) speaks of parenthood and the role children can play to make better adults and build a better society.

To become the father or mother of a child is to be shaken by them, to witness the myriad sensory,

intellectual, and political effects of their emergence into our lives... Among these effects, there is thus the tangible recognition of our finiteness, our vulnerability, even our own absurdity, with all that this discovery can imply in terms of responsibility and clarity, caution and courage. (Birnbaum 2023, p. 14, own translation)

In her book *Matters Of Care, Speculative Ethics In More Than Human Worlds* (2017) María Puig de la Bellacasa insists on the capacity of touch to change our knowledge of the world, as it is always a double-effect of touching and being touched in return. It should be clear by now that having been touched my maternity has changed our sensitive experience of and relationship to the world. And

also, that we mothers are at the forefront of touching, and caring for what comes next.

Relating to the world through touch opens towards "a world constantly done and undone through encounters that accentuate both the attraction of closeness as well as awareness of alterity" (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, p. 115). It is also possible to link this approach to Erin Manning's "politics of touch", which offers a reflection on the role that touch and "sensing bodies" can play in moving political structures. She gives touch a philosophical and political potential: "Touch visceral, emotional and intellectual - is the seed for a 'democracy to come'" (Manning 2007, p. 115-116).

As mother-creators and researchers we put forward that in recognizing and embracing our experience of maternity in the artistic and academic fields, we can fuel change. So I would like to finish this short reflection by asking some questions in relation to the arts, the circus, the world:

Can the experience of motherhood be a chance for more care and compassion in the arts and the circus world?

Can we adopt a posture of curiosity thanks to mothers' experiences of disruption and transformation to question established and taken-for-granted practices?

Can we build an ecosystem inspired by our relationship to the world and our capacity to make community, build a system where all the experiences of the human lifecycle are accounted for?

I want to believe so.

## References

- Birnbaum, J. (2023) *Seuls les enfants changent le monde*. Seuil Editions.
- Butler, J. (2001). Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory. *Theatre Journal*, 40(4), 519–31.
- Butler, J. (1988). *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*. Routledge.
- Damasio, A. (2019) *Les Furtifs*. La Volte.
- Delvaux M. (2017). *Le monde est à toi*. Hélotropes Editions
- Drolet G. (2022). *Acrobaties domestiques*. XYZ Editions.
- Fayolle M. (2020). *Les petits*. Broché.
- Froidevaux-Metterie, C. (2023). *Un si gros ventre*. Stock Editions.
- Froidevaux-Metterie, C. (2021). *Un corps à soi*. Seuil Editions.
- Halberstam, J. (2011). *The Queer Art of Failure*. Duke University Press.
- Huston, N. (1990). *Journal de la création*. Seuil Editions
- Manning, E. (2007). *Politics of Touch: Sense, Movement, Sovereignty*. New edition. University of Minnesota Press.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1945). *Phénoménologie De La Perception*. Gallimard
- Muñoz, J.E. (2009). *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York University Press

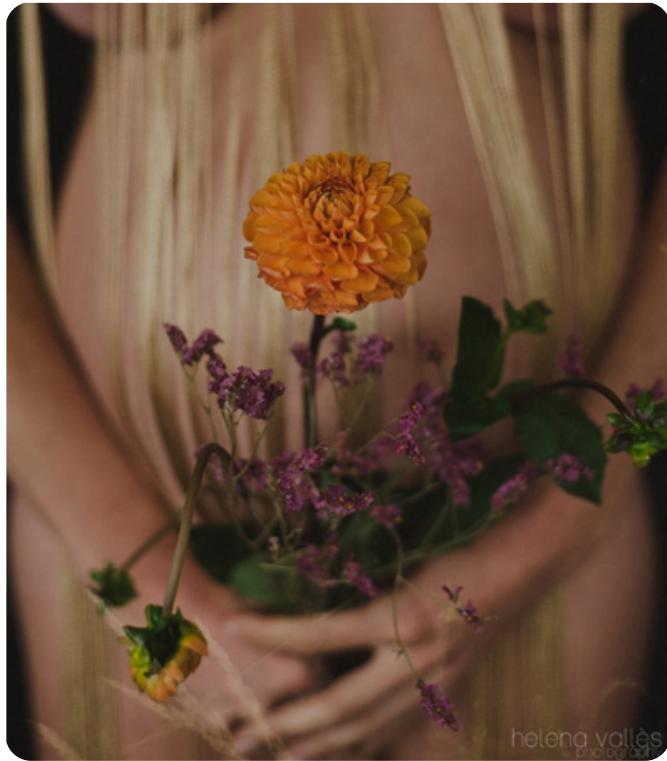


Photo Helena Valès

Nelson, M. (2017). *Les argonautes*. Triptyque Editions  
Plana, M. (2018). *Fictions queer - Esthétique et politique de l'imagination dans la littérature et les arts du spectacle*, EU Dijon.

Preciado, P. B. (2019a). *Un Appartement Sur Uranus*. Grasset.

Preciado, P. B. (2019b, May 25). *Le corps est la chose la plus public qui soit* [Interview by M. Richeux]. France Culture. <https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/par-les-temps-qui-courent/paul-b-preciado>

Puig de la Bellacasa, M. (2017). *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds*. Broché.

Richeux, M. (2021). *Sages Femmes*. Sabine Wespieser Edition

Solnit, R. (2006). *A field guide to getting lost*. Penguin Books.

### Podcasts

Mogenet, J., Mallet, A-L. (2023). *Comment j'ai retrouvé ma mère*. Axelle Magazine Sarlat, C. (2018 – present) La Matrescence.

Roy, A. (2019) *Sage meuf*. Europe 1

### Gracias, Thank you,

Javiera Osorio-Ghigliotto, my mother Catherine Perahia, Emma Tilquin, Cassandre Chatonnier, Marylène Dussault, Les Madres, Geneviève Robitaille, Elise Leblanc, Audrey-Lise Mallet, Gaëlle Saules, Juliette Brahier, Les tenaces, Anne-Laure Jeanson, Aouatef Krikrou, Camille Havas, and many more.



'Balance' de Era Parca. Encuentro Internacional de Circo y sus Saberes – Achura Karpa. Centro Nacional de las Artes, Bogotá, febrero, 2024. Foto: Nicolás Mahecha