Illegitimate Mothers: Discursive Renegotiation of the Unlawful, the Misbegotten, and the Misbehaving

Dr. Teresa Winterhalter
Armstrong Atlantic State University
Dr. Beth Howells
Armstrong Atlantic State University
Mr. Benjamin Winterhalter
Boston College Law School
“Mothers don’t write, they are written.”

Helene Deutsch
“Thou ill-formed offspring of my feeble brain, 
Who after birth didst by my side remain, 
Till snatched from thence by friends, less wise than true, 
Who thee abroad, exposed to public view…”

Anne Bradstreet
from “The Author to Her Book 
circa 1687

“…my hideous progeny…”

Mary Shelley
from “The Preface” to Frankenstein
1837 edition
Caravaggio, The Sacrifice of Isaac, 1603
Oil on canvas, 41 x 53
Rafaello Sanzio, The Judgment of Solomon, 1518
Fresco, The Vatican
She put her head in her hands. Then she reached in and, focusing as well as she could with one hand, the baby slapping at her through the bars, wheezing with laughter, she found one cool bare thigh, the rosy tightness of it, and pinched it with three fingers, kept pinching hard, till she got that angry uvula again, and a good bit of very wet tongue. Through the magnifier it was spiny as some plant, some sponge maybe, under the sea.

Rosellen Brown
Rocking the Cradle and Rocking the Boat: The Complicated Community of “Mommy Blogs”
But then I hear the voices of my children...
Kate Daniels,
“In My Office at Bennington”

And I’m paper torn in half,
the poem that didn’t work,
the wrong words, sour sounds,
ruptured rhythms, the confusion
as to what was meant, what I actually
desired besides those three small faces
raised to my open window, calling
my name over and over, Mama?
What Is the Best Work of American Fiction of the Last 25 Years?

Recently, the Book Review’s editor, Sam Tanenhaus, sent out a short letter to a couple of hundred prominent writers, critics, editors and other literary sages, asking them to please identify “the single best work of American fiction published in the last 25 years.” [Read A.O. Scott’s essay] Following are the results.

Note
This feature will appear in the May 21 issue of the print edition of the Book Review.

THE WINNER:
Beloved
Toni Morrison
(1987)

Related
Review
Mommy Blogs

Babble's Top 50 - 2009
Mommy Bloggers

Babble Best - Mommy Bloggers

Mommy bloggers make a difference. Sometimes it's their confessional tone that helps you feel like you're not the only one, sometimes their simple honesty puts you at ease, and sometimes they're so funny, you almost snarf your protein shake. There are the bloggers we relate to and there are others we watch like a train wreck, but no matter where we're coming from, we're all part of the same overwhelming, magical situation.

That's why we're dedicating the inaugural Babble Top 50 list to those who know best moms. Babble staff and contributors compiled our top mommy-blogger picks based on the following criteria: most controversial, funniest, most confessional, best design, most useful and best written.

Nominate a Blogger
Nominate or vote for your favorite mommy bloggers here and help us to select our Top 50.
Infertility

turns out you can be...
a little pregnant

maddoc
misadventures in
infertility, pregnancy, and parenthood

08/03/2010

Breaking news: Local mother, supplanted by cat, finds parenting challenging

I don't get discouraged very often. Oh, I have my isolated hours of weary frustration, my moments of teeth-gritting, my fifteen-second flashes of What if I just kept driving? I note for the record that those last do not occur during drives with the children in the back, like the one we took yesterday afternoon. The screaming (Elin's) and recriminations (Charlie's) were enough to make me suspect that our hybrid runs not on electricity but on filial discord. The louder you whine, the faster I drive.

It's been a rough ten days. Since we got back from our trip, Charlie's behavior has been almost uniformly rotten. Defiance, rudeness, and aggression have been boiling so near his emotional surface that the smallest provocation — or sometimes none at all — results in an outburst that confounds all our attempts to defuse it. I can usually weather the occasional storm with good humor, and even lately my lips twitch as I try not to smile; there's something hilarious about being berated by a five-year-old who hasn't learned to swear. "You are a...spoiled...b--y!" he spatters. True, but I was really hoping for something in an inflexible hamidian. Shall we try again?

But at the moment I'm frazzled... This time I'm having a hard time recovering...
Don't Get Drunk Fridays: Black Hockey Jesus's Story

It's no secret that I love me some Black Hockey Jesus. From the get go I was captivated by his whole vibe - he was doing something with his writing that I hadn't seen before and I liked it, a lot. We started talking and I found out that he didn't drink and Shazam! I knew what it was I liked about him so much. I've talked to him about a lot of stuff because he's one of those people you just feel you can trust with your darkness. He's...
Dear Nature, you’re hurting people.

by BAREFOOTFOODIE on MARCH 5, 2010

I don’t want to alarm anyone, but...I think Earth is pissed.

I don’t know if it’s because the hills keep getting renewed, or because Mike Tyson got that tattoo on his face and everybody is still acting like it’s normal, but...OMG. AL GORE WAS RIGHT.

We are having earthquakes, and tsunamis, and I just watched a video on CNN where a wave crashed through a cruise ship.
Humor/Survival of Child Abuse

SLIPPING ON THE ICE ALL WINTER LONG

SUBURBAN BLISS

2010.03.04

Did They Eat It: White Bean Chicken Chili

This is one of my favorite recipes. It's one I can count toward my Life List Goal of having a handful of recipes I can make off the top of my head. It's pretty...
About Janeen

Janeen is a single mom in her 40's. She's a city girl who is adjusting to her new life in a small town on Washington's Olympic Peninsula. She is frequently overwhelmed, often delighted, and always caffeinated.

View her profile

Email Me
Blogging as a radical act

I asked for it.

Never let it be said that my readers lack opinions. Sometimes all the opinions make me twitch, but in this case, you guys have been amazing.

Here’s a rundown of your many and varied thoughts:

- There is a general consensus that the green and red lamp is the best thing in the room. Agreed.
- Also, the general sentiment is that there is too much clutter. Agreed as well, but living in a 900-square-foot apartment does present challenges, especially when you have a child who insists on throwing his Legos hither and yon. But we'll work on it, okay? GEEZ.
- And now, a brief rundown of the predominant sentiments:
  - Wall behind couch should be painted:
    - Turquoise
    - Leafy green
    - Light blue
    - Warm yellow

http://www.finslippy.com/finslippy/
So far, so good

I've recently made friends with a lovely woman up the street who kindly took pity on me when she noticed that I spend my entire day with my husband. Not that Jon is difficult to live or work with. He is my soul mate and best friend. But, come on. Space in a marriage is vital to its long term survival. Almost as vital as sex, I said ALMOST. Nothing is more important than sex, except maybe Radiohead.

Her name is Kate, and she has a gorgeous sixteen-month-old son. She's been inviting me to play dates with her friends who have similarly-aged children, and if Mario's awake I'll bring him with me. If
The Armstrong Bathroom Makeover Catastrophe

UPDATE: If you don’t normally read the comments on these posts I highly recommend you make an exception in this case. Holy crap, the crackheads have come out!

Two years ago when we moved into this house (a process chronicled here, here, here, and here) we knew that at some point we were going to do an entire remodel of the downstairs bathroom. We envisioned knocking down a wall, tearing out every fixture, installing a...
93. Anonymous said:

YOU ARE ONE F___ING SPOILED PERSON!

Do you realize how F___ing spoiled you even are? That things in your life are so wonderful and going so well that you actually have the freedom and liberty to complain about how your bathroom looks?!

I would give anything to have the great life you obviously have, to be able to complain about my bathroom! I'd give anything to not have relatives who are dying, a potential job loss in the future, lots of $$$ that you make from advertisers to your blog, a healthy child, another on the way, and a husband who dotes on you. Do you even realize how blessed you are?? Do you?

How come every one of your posts is a sarcastic one about something going on in your life, that's actually a blessing? Why do you turn around every incident that happens to you and poke fun at it, when it actually just shows you're a blessed person?

All I can say is--- enjoy it while it lasts. Time still still for nobody. We are all getting old, and will get sick and die. We will ALL die! Every one of us, all our parents, our partners, our kids, our relatives and our friends... we will, someday, be alone with nobody who loves us unconditionally.
Your momma said you ugly

So I guess it was maybe a year ago when I was sitting in Heather Champ’s living room in San Francisco, holding her Chihuahua Chieka, and talking about how people sometimes send me hate mail because they look at a picture of Chuck and think his nails are too long. She was all, SHUT UP YOU DO NOT. And I was all YOU SHUT UP. And she was all WHY DID I EVEN LET YOU INTO MY HOUSE, BITCH? And next thing you know we’re mud-wrestling in the nude, pulling each other’s hair, and fulfilling the fantasies of IT departments nationwide.
Brand Bullying: Is It The Power Of Social Media? Or Is It Just The Power Of Celebrity? And Who Will Protect Maytag From Us?

By Aneta on 08.28.2009

In WAXING PHILOSOPHICAL

New here? You may want to subscribe to the (free) ABDPBT Personal Finance RSS Feed. For an explanation of how RSS subscriptions work, please see this explanatory post. Or, you can also sign up to receive new ABDPBT Personal Finance posts by email (also free).
Confessions of a Renegade Mom

Dooce Happens

In this Finch I shall tell you a story boys and girls...So grab your favorite pint of ice cream, your best jammies and sit back while I tell you a tale...a tale of shit and a washing machine and all took place in this crazy land far away called Real Life.
Mom-101
I don't know what I'm doing either

7.27.2009

The Year that Shame Died

Last week, the brilliant Busy Mom tweeted that 2009 is the year that shame died. I jokingly responded that no, I think that was back in 1983 when Madonna introduced lingerie as outerwear. But her quip has stayed with me ever since.

The BlogHer conference, as always, was phenomenal in so many ways. A chance to be in a room with 1400 other people who don't need me to explain exactly what it is that I do? Awesome. Having attended now for four years, I've seen it grow and change in fascinating ways.
Not all bloggers are like that

Aside from reuniting with old friends, meeting new ones, and missing some that couldn't make it, this conference has been about explaining my new motto

"Not all bloggers are like that."

We're not all about the free shit and the shameless self-promotion and the bullshit drama that can only be explained as link bait.
Don’t call me a mommy blogger

by JULIE on JULY 25, 2009

Edited below:

I may have mentioned a time or two before that I resist labeling myself.

No matter what the label may be – Objectivist, feminist, Libertarian, independent – I can think of a reason I don’t want to wear it. Humanist is fundamentally accurate but requires too much explanation. And “bright” is ridiculous and borderline offensive, even though Michael Shermer and Penn & Teller (whom I greatly admire) have self-identified as such.

But I never grumbled about the label mommy blogger before now. The shoe fit.
warm mushroom salad with hazelnuts

So, this is a tale of two salads. No wait, three. Okay, this is the tale of three salads.
The first one crossed our table at brunch with my mother and the little pilot two weeks
ago (you might remember that our last brunch together resulting in us obsessing over
monkey bread, who knew brunch could be such a source of inspiration) at one of our
favorite local restaurants: warm mushroom, softly cooked, chestnuts cooked in brown
butter, bacon lardons and a port reduction. We haven’t stopped talking about it since.
FRIDAY, MARCH 01, 2010

A FEW THINGS

UPDATED DAILY,
I'M GABRIELLE BLAIR. I'M A
DESIGNER/ART DIRECTOR AND
MOTHER OF FIVE IN NEW YORK.
I POST ON WHERE DESIGN AND
MOTHERHOOD INTERSECT.

SEND TIPS, PRODUCTS OR
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GABRIELLE@DESIGNMOM.COM

Home, Made...
The Dwell Homes Collection
Monetizing The Hate

Making money from the crap people say, with special thanks to Heather Champ | Get me outta here (take me back to dooce.com)

Ellington Chic Leather Handbags

Spacious inside

Okay, don’t ask me why but I just tortured myself and
HOWDY Y’ALL!

Welcome to the new dooce® Community, a new room we’ve added to Wackadoo Land! We built this space for you to interact with other dooce readers, to ask questions and gather information from each other on topics that range from babies, to depression, to hair care, cameras and pets. Thanks for stopping by, now let’s go have some fun!

Don’t know where to begin? [Click here for some tips!](http://community.dooce.com)