



Reclamation and Restoration of the Mother Archetype: Maternal Subversion in the Select Works of Kavita Kane and Madeline Miller

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Abstract

Archetypes are considered representations of the human experience; they are a part of cultural memory. The archetype of the mother is one of the most layered and conceptually complex archetypes. The idealised maternal figure has always been described as selfless and pure. A mother who falls short of social ideals of motherhood expectations is 'mom-shamed'. The idealised maternal discourse in canonical texts has ignored issues of maternal burnout and maternal dissatisfaction. Cultural narratives and archetypes have functioned as a disciplinary device that constructs motherhood as an institution. Discussing paradoxical ideologies about motherhood is often considered objectionable and unacceptable. This paper hopes to explore the deconstruction of the mother as an archetype in the select novels of Kavita Kane and Madeline Miller, who have extended the archetype beyond the patriarchal ideology. Contemporary literature has embraced ambivalence, rage and regret as dimensions of the motherhood experience. The democratisation of traditional canonical discourses is facilitated through modern retellings of myths, which embrace the fluidity of the motherhood experience. This paper analyses how the select writings of the authors Kavita Kane and Madeline Miller subvert the cultural mythology and portray motherhood as a paradoxical position that is both fulfilling and limiting. To give credence to the interpretation, the paper borrows insights from Erich Neumann, Adrienne Rich, Susan J. Douglas, Meredith Michaels, Orna Donath, and various other theorists to identify how society disapproves of anything that cannot be labelled as 'intensive mothering' and expose the ideological operation behind the archetypes. The paper employs a multidimensional approach by examining various facets of motherhood, including Maternal Ambivalence, Maternal Rage, and Maternal Regret.

Keywords: Archetypes, Mom Shaming, Patriarchal Ideologies, Maternal Dissatisfaction, Intensive Mothering.

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Introduction

The mother in modern reinterpretations of mythology has expanded the archetypal possibilities and has reconfigured the maternal metaphor. The retellings acknowledge the foundational gap between the maternal archetype and the experience of motherhood. The selected authors-Kavita Kane and Madeline Miller intervene at the cultural level and reconstitute the archetype at its origin. Kane and Miller, in their works, demonstrate the complexity and the multiplicity of maternal experience. Their writing uses traditional foundations to diffuse contemporary expressions; a new form of cultural negotiation emerges through this form of writing. This generative transformation challenges the notion of treating archetypes as invariably permanent and considers them as modifiable and dynamic. This type of reconstructive work redirects the reader's attention to how 'mom shaming' has always been a part of cultural structure. Society has set unattainable standards for motherhood; this can be called 'new momism'. Susan J. Douglas and Meredith Michaels (2004) when talking about 'new momism' in their work the *Mommy Myth: The Idealization of Motherhood and How It Has Undermined Women* write "set of ideals, norms, and practices, most frequently and powerfully represented in the media, that seem on the surface to celebrate motherhood, but which in reality promulgate standards of perfection that are beyond your reach." (Douglas and Michaels, 2004, p. 21) Kane and Miller's writings fall under the category of feminist revisionist mythology; they take on the multidimensional element of mythology with a woman-centered framework. Their gynocentric viewpoint strives for a more equitable representation of female characters by giving insight into women who experienced contradictory emotions in motherhood.

1. Beyond Conventional Motherhood: Kavita Kane's Restoration and Reclamation of the Motherhood Archetype

The Mother archetype, among others, is perhaps the most complex, but still approached in a largely oversimplified way, conforming to binaries such as good/bad mother; this idea is conceptualised in Erich Neumann's (1955) work *The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype*, which identifies motherhood in polarised categories of positive and negative but also delineates the multifaceted expressions of motherhood. But cultural ideals in the pursuit of identifying polarities within motherhood ignore the intermediate experiences. This thereby limits individual and alternative experiences of motherhood, including Maternal Ambivalence, Maternal Rage, and Maternal Regret. Anything that cannot be defined as self-sacrificial and unconditional is labelled as inauthentic mothering, and prevailing social expectations expect mothers to be perfect.

Social institutions believe that women are natural caregivers. This makes Maternal Ambivalence rarely a topic of discussion in dominant narratives and often invokes conflicted responses. Patrice DiQuinzio, in her work *The Impossibility of Motherhood Feminism, Individualism and the Problem of Mothering*, talks about maternal ambivalence "mothers report that mothering is a deeply ambivalent experience in which, at one time or another, they feel exaltation, despair, and many other emotions in between." (DiQuinzio, 1999, p.9) Kane's fundamental operation of moving motherhood away from prescriptive expectations began with her works like *Menaka's Choice* (2015) and *Lanka's Princess* (2017). Kane's writing presented mothers who were ambivalent and flawed, consequently reclaiming the mother from the idealised mother framework. Kane represents the inherent complexity of the motherhood experience in many of her novels. Kane's writing in *Menaka's Choice* presents Menaka, the celestial nymph, as a figure of duality; when forced to be a seductress, she struggles to reconcile with her principles. As an apsara, she is forced to tempt sage Vishwamitra; it is forced upon her against her will, and what starts as a task grows into true love. Kane establishes how Menaka is not devoid of emotions, but rather a victim of circumstances and fate "Motherhood

was an unearthly metamorphosis for her. She recalled Urvashi's words, 'Apsaras are not meant to be mothers.' If the world commonly entitled a mother to be one who does not demand, who does not take, but feels it her privilege to give, Menaka knew she and her like had corrupted the definition." (Kane, 2015, p.153). Kane's writing denotes that cultural norms dictate who gets to be a mother since Menaka is a seductress; her maternal worth is determined by a socially constructed identity. Menaka is forced to give up on her daughter, Shakuntala; what is seen as an act of betrayal was actually an act of sacrifice to protect her daughter from the political embroilments of Indralok. Kane poignantly captures the painful collision with reality when Menaka meets her daughter Shakuntala "You are a mortal, Shakuntala, a princess. You were deprived of our love, but not our concern." (Kane, 2015, p.217). For Menaka, it was providing her daughter with a chance at a better life, where her life is not determined by divine rules. But Menaka's actions are considered morally deviant and ambivalent because, as an apsara, she doesn't fit within the carefully crafted labels of acceptable maternal identity. Because of her label as a seductress, she is immediately considered to be failing her maternal duty. Acceptable depictions of maternal duty only allow little room for individual experiences in motherhood; this makes society condemn many forms of motherhood experience as unnatural.

In *Lanka's Princess*, Kane does not present Surpanakha, who is essentially a monster, someone who is supposed to be devoid of love, but Meenakshi, a fierce maternal figure who is morally intricate. Surpanakha becomes the nurturing and protective maternal figure Meenakshi; by renaming Surpanakha as Meenakshi, Kane removes her from the imposed reductive identity given to her by her brother Ravan, meaning "woman as hard as nails" (Kane, 2017a, p.11). Her identity as an asura is not a signal of maternal ambivalence; her imposed labels make her a stigmatised mother where her actions are going to be judged no matter what. Marginalised identities are often equated with maternal inadequacy; Kane's writing reclaims all dimensions of motherhood, including the emotional conflict and cultural rejection that Meenakshi as Surpanakha experiences.

1.1 Recapturing the Maternal Rage

Maternal Rage often goes against the societal archetype of the 'perfect mother' and does not often find a place within an acceptable form of maternal conduct. Mothering, a concept that was popularised by Adrienne Rich (1976) in her pioneering work *Of Woman Born, Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, defines Mothering as an expression that embraces a wide spectrum of maternal experiences, including rage. Female rage has often been undermined, even mocked, by cultural systems. Because obvious displays of anger in mothers are against the ideals of the 'best mother' practices, "The best mothers always smile. They always understand. They are never tired. They never lose their temper." (Douglas and Michaels, 2004, p.22). When society adapts to mothering, it will very much realise that rage is also a manifestation of a mother's love. Kane's Meenakshi is not sympathetic to anyone who wronged her son, Sambhukumar. Meenakshi's unconditional love fuels her revenge towards Ram and Lakshman, who killed her son. Meenakshi's primal maternal instincts direct her towards the path of revenge; this rage makes her fall outside the rigid boundaries of an ideal composed mother. Kane's writings demonstrate what is known as 'feminist mothering'; according to Andrea O'Reilly, "the term feminist mothering refers to an oppositional discourse of motherhood, one that is constructed as a negation of patriarchal motherhood." (O'Reilly, 2008, p. 4) This recourse writing methodology adopted by Kane demonstrates how the traditional canon justifies mother-blaming by setting normative standards for motherhood, and only accepts 'intensive mothering' as normal. In the words of Susan J. Douglas and Meredith Michaels, who offer an analysis on this, "Intensive mothering, everyone watches us, we watch ourselves and other mothers, and we watch ourselves watching ourselves." (Douglas and Michaels, 2004, p. 22) Kane's writing embraces maternal ambivalence and rage as an inherent part of the motherhood experience. Kane challenges the discourse that only ideological extremes of nurturing and destructive poles of motherhood exist.

Feminists discuss how the patriarchal prescription laid for the mother is often in conflict with the maternal well-being of the mother. Theorists like Erich Neumann uncover and reveal the fact that different types of motherhood archetypes that align but deviate from what is today defined as imperfection in motherhood have historically always existed. This conceptualisation is seen in Kane's (2021) character, Goddess Sarasvati; from *Sarasvati's Gift*, she is far from the abstract idealised version of a Goddess; she becomes the embodiment of creativity and intellect, but also someone who undergoes profound moral conflict and expresses her outrage towards humanity. Sarasvati's rage is evident in Kane's writing "In your arrogance, you forgot the gift I presented to mankind. You forgot to preserve Nature, its beings." (Kane, 2021, p.2) Kane's writing also justifies the anger of Sarasvati by making her enraged by how mankind destroys nature; this positions Sarasvati in the archetypal framework of 'The Great Mother'. The Great Mother is an archetype that is beyond the maternal binary of good and bad cultural norms. Sibylle Birkhäuser-Oeri, in her work *The Mother: Archetypal Image in Fairy Tales*, states, "the Great Mother is goddess of the uncontrolled passions, ecstatic, intoxicated. These too are prominent tendencies in the modern world." (Oeri, 1988, p.17) Conventional constructed ideals of motherhood only emblemize nurturance, abundance and love; the fierce spectrum of a mother is disparaged and derided. Kane's layered writing makes Goddess Sarasvati a divine figure that is still the spiritual caregiver of the world; because Sarasvati's decision to leave humanity is born out of love and not out of hatred, which challenges the idealised notion that mothers should have unlimited patience with wrongdoings. Kane's writing still situates Sarasvati within the Great Mother archetypal structure because Kane, in *Sarasvati's Gift*, reframes what is considered unnatural in motherhood.

1.2 Kane's Restoration of Maternal Complexity

Cultural norms often dismiss the in-between in maternal experiences, where the most complex mothering occurs, because the in-between is considered an unstable form of motherhood as society idolises 'the perfect mother'. "The Perfect Mother, the woman for whom childbearing supersedes all other identities and satisfactions." (Douglas and Michaels, 2004, p.43) The ideological framework believes that a mother cannot be simultaneously exhausted and adore her children at the same time. Contradictory Characters like Uruvi from Kane's *Karna's Wife* (2013), Urmila from *Sita's Sister* (2014) are assigned the roles of nurturing, supportive mothers. They are mothers in the biological sense, but are also culturally categorised as mothers for their attributes of mercy and abundance. Uruvi, from *Karna's Wife*, is reluctant to accept Karna's participation in war, but only her approval towards his participation will make her a nurturing wife. The ideological promise of being a supportive wife forces her to go against her individual principles. This is evident in the words of Kane, "healer until the last days of her life, who had hated war but who lived through the bloodiest of them all." (Kane, 2013, p. 363). She is expected to fulfil her marital duty even if it means supporting the wrong side of the war. But Uruvi also becomes the figure who stabilises Karna's family when Karna is fighting a war. Kane's writing consolidates in Uruvi someone who is supportive but still voices her resistance. Kane's writing is a complex narrative situated beyond binary good and evil. This aligns with Neumann's ideas, where he sees ambivalence and reversal that can occur within the positive or negative pole.

Urmila, in *Sita's Sister*, takes on multiple roles: a wife to Lakshman, a queen for her subjects and also a primal figure that takes on the family responsibilities, the embodiment of nurturing feminine energy. She becomes the embodiment of unsurpassed sacrifice when she is separated from her husband for fourteen years as her marital duty. But Kane's narrative focuses on the duality of Urmila; she experiences the satisfaction of fulfilling her duty to her family, but experiences loss and resentment at the same time. Kane presents the narrative in a way that Urmila, expressing her loss, is not seen as a moral failure. By showcasing individual grief and anger, do not make her any less perfect. Urmila daringly questions Ram's choice of subjecting

Sita to *agnipariksha*; Kane's writing reinforces the idea that these events do not diminish her inherent worth.

1.3 Kane's Negotiation of Maternal Regret

Satyavati from Kane's (2017) *The Fisher Queen Dynasty* is conventionally blamed as the origin of all problems in the Mahabharata, her ambitions leading to the downfall of an empire. Kane's rendering is non-reductive and showcases a woman who simply doesn't want to live as a socially marginalised fisherwoman. She doesn't make Satyavati into a woman who wants complete hegemonic political authority, but rather a woman who is trying to survive in a world that tries to trample her. Discarded at birth, Satyavati had to make difficult choices just to cling to life, but cultural preferences for motherhood give no space for maternal regret to exist. When Satyavati decides to give up on her son born out of wedlock, she does not act impulsively but rather deliberates, chooses an option that will secure her son's life "I will be an unmarried mother. I neither want to renounce my child nor make him suffer the insult of being illegitimate." (Kane, 2018, p.26) Kane's narrative relocates the epicentre to her strength and resolve; she presents a morally complex woman who alternates between good and evil. At first glance, Satyavati comes across as a mother who seeks political dominance for her progeny, but her unrelenting drive for power is humanised as a struggle against the snobbery of the world. Her malevolence is not justified, but is rather seen as a damaged and broken woman's ambition which becomes her strength and her tragic flaw.

Kane seizes the opportunity to make Satyavati's negative emotions allow her to emerge as a complex figure, with expressions of both virtue and vice "In her vulnerable moments, she gave in to the guilt of giving him away so easily to his father. Would he bear the same resentment she bore for her own father?" (Kane, 2018, p.140) Kane showcases that maternal regret manifests in different ways, sometimes due to the pressure of social conventions "But it was better her son remained with his father than with her. He would grow up with dignity, and be groomed with the best education. She had done what she thought was best for him, and it would remain a closed chapter of her life." (Kane, 2018, p.45) Orna Donath echoes this idea in her work *Regretting Motherhood: A Sociopolitical Analysis*, "Socio-political meanings of regretting motherhood, as motherhood and mothers are not outside of culture, nor are their regrets." (Donath, 2015, p. 363) Kane articulates the inherent complexities of maternal regret through Satyavati. She foregrounds the idea that maternal regret doesn't always correspond to the idea of being an inadequate mother. Kane's narrative emphasises that Satyavati was a young, naïve unmarried woman who had no choice but to give up on her child due to social conventions.

1.4 Kane's Restoration through Embracing the Uncertain in Motherhood

Kane's restoration underscores that, even after questioning established norms and fundamentally rejecting the foundational 'perfect mother' framework, many characters like Goddess Sarasvati and Urmila are still widely and culturally accepted as figures of perfection. This reveals that archetypes are fluid and dynamic, embracing polarity. Characters who question the structures of social convention and confront patriarchal norms can be accepted and seen in a positive light. This is where concepts like 'Mothering' come, which gives space for the individual and society to coexist, embracing ambivalence, rage, even regret as a true maternal experience. Kane doesn't just acknowledge the positive side and decline the negative, but rather contends that virtue and vice can coexist.

2. Hidden Dimensions: Maternal Ambivalence Unearthed in Madeline Miller

Monica Sjoo, in her work *The Great Cosmic Mother*, defines the mother as "She is the beauty of the green earth, the life-giving waters, the consuming fire, the radiant moon, and the fiery

sun.”(Sjoo, 1987, p. 14) A mother becomes a revelation that is seen as the beginning of organic life, but since the mother is the representation of grace, only regulated and contained responses are accepted within the prescribed norms of motherhood.

Madeline Miller’s writing advocates for a more fluid understanding of the mother archetype. Miller’s (2018) novel *Circe* portrays a mother who embraces her maternal identity but admits to complexities and ambivalent emotions. “Motherhood seemed easy to me, before I had a child. I did not go easy to motherhood. I faced it as soldiers face their enemies, girded and braced, sword up against the coming blows.” (Miller, 2018, p. 197). Miller writes about Circe’s maternal ambivalence in a way that her maternal legitimacy is not questioned, because the realities of maternal experience differ from ideological prescriptions for motherhood. Circe articulates her exhaustion from being a mother “Every minute I must wash and boil and clean and scrub and put to soak. Yet how could I do that, when every minute he also needed something, food and change and sleep?” (Miller, 2018, p. 197) Uncertainty and exhaustion in a maternal experience do not equate to insufficient love in Miller’s writing. Cultural assumptions perceive Circe, a fierce witch, as someone incapable of motherhood. This exclusion is based on the idealised standards of motherhood. According to society, Circe is a witch who is unfit to be a mother; but in Miller’s reinterpretation, Circe is a mother who makes profound sacrifices for her loved ones; she nearly dies trying to obtain Trygon’s tail, which contains the world’s deadliest poison, to ensure safe travels for her son Telegonus.

2.1 Miller’s Restoration: Integration of the Raging Mother in Motherhood

Reactionary responses are labelled unmaternal, even if it’s a mother’s natural protective instincts; Retaliatory responses are equated with a mother’s maternal worth. Miller’s writings move away from the sanitised image of motherhood, where a mother’s primal responses are not seen as maternal failure. Societal norms do not consider retribution as part of legitimate maternal emotion; this is because unregulated emotions in motherhood are labelled as irrational. Retribution and retaliatory fury in Miller’s hands get restored as justifiable emotion in motherhood. When Goddess Athena tries to harm her son, Circe’s manifestation of maternal love is not tender; it comes in confrontation, even with a Goddess “Tell me, how long do you think your witcheries will stand against me?” “As long as they need to.” (Miller, 2018, p. 202). Miller embodies and restores Erich Neumann’s analysis of the mother archetype, which channels both preservation and annihilation “This effect appears, for example, in positive and negative emotions, in fascinations and projections, and also in anxiety, in manic and depressive states.” (Neumann, 1955, p.3) Miller’s narrative acknowledges the manic and unhinged ferocity as a form of profound maternal protection through Circe’s actions “Sorry that you thought I was weak, but you were wrong.” (Miller, 2018, p. 160) Miller’s spectrum of maternal emotions restores fury as a valid human response; it does not signify the moral failing of Circe as a mother.

3. Restoration of the Mother Archetype: Embracing the Unbecoming of Perfect Mother in Kane and Miller

A mother is considered a figure of abundance across societies, so the topic of maternal regret is culturally incongruous with motherhood ideals. Orna Donath engages with this idea and states, “Motherhood itself is rarely associated with regret, and the potential presence of regret is disregarded.” (Donath, 2015, p. 347) As women are seen as innate caregivers and protectors, anyone who doesn’t view motherhood as a gift is seen as a threat to the institution and socially ostracised. Hence, any mother who is an embodiment of dark feminine energy, associated with decay, death, and has ambivalent feelings towards motherhood, is relegated and excluded from dominant discourses, for they are often defined by negativity and insubordination. The fundamental distinction between the positive and negative poles of motherhood is the

intolerance that society holds against the negative pole. The negative pole is exemplified by Neumann (1955) using figures such as Kali, Lilith and the witches.

A mother is only ever appreciated when she is morally perfect and is boundlessly devoted to the child's needs. This brings us back to the concept of '*The Angel in the House*', a poem written by Coventry Patmore (1854). The poem became the foundation on which 'the perfect mother' ideals were built. Women were expected to show unfaltering devotion towards their husbands and children "Man must be pleased; but him to please is woman's pleasure." (Patmore, 1854, Book I, canto IX, lines 1–2) The concept reinforces the idea that anyone who fails by the prescriptive norms is an incompetent mother and wife. The conceptualisation of the 'Angel in the House' shares a significant affinity with the positive pole of motherhood, as described by Neumann (1955) using figures like Egyptian goddess Isis, Sophia and Mary from Christian theologies; these figures, in context, only represent the culturally sanctioned ideals of motherhood that is selfless love. But feminists argue that in the course of selfless love, the woman loses herself. Susan J. Douglas and Meredith Michaels elucidate how society loves categorisation of mothers in binaries: the good and the bad "there had to be the terrible mothers, the anti-Madonnas, the hideous counterexamples good mothers were meant to revile." (Douglas and Michaels, 2004, p.37)

Kane and Miller revisit the archetype and restore it to its original state. Current social anxieties only give space for the perfectionist mother to exist; this cultural rejection of imperfect mothers and mom shaming has grown steadily. According to Neumann, the archetype has always been a site of negotiation and fluidity, integrating polarity within motherhood. His framework, 'The Great Round', identifies and organises cultural figures that constitute positive and negative feminine energy. These intersecting axes are positioned in a circular way to elucidate the polarities that can coexist within a single archetype. Kane and Miller's writings accommodate the restrained standards such as ambivalence, anger and regret, which the world considers as a maternal flaw and conceals. Adrienne Rich offers a nuanced account of this in her work *On Lies, Secrets and Silence* "It is women who are supposed to absorb the anger, the hunger, the unmet needs, the psychic and physical pain of the human lives." (Rich, 1979, p.302).

Kane and Miller's writing witnesses the natural integration of the two poles, light and darkness. Though this negative pole is a significant departure from the pure, passive model of motherhood seen in the positive pole. Kane and Miller view them as two inseparable, complementary factors of the same principle; the circular configuration of the structure denotes fluidity and oscillation between the poles. The figures that are generally identified in the negative pole are seen as an embodiment of maternal regret. This perpetuated ideology is fundamentally reorganised by Kane and Miller, giving a more liberated motherhood experience. Kane and Miller's characterisation serve as the primary site of restoration; their characters reject a singular normative experience of motherhood, foregrounding plurality.

Kane and Miller use mythology as a scaffold to discuss issues in motherhood; their writing does not condemn motherhood but rather the cultural construction of it. Their narrative indicates the complexity of motherhood and restores it from unreasonable ideals. This narrative reorganisation by Kane and Miller reveals the maternal reality rather than idealised intensive mothering. The select authors' restoration and parallel reconstruction of the archetype is done by resisting the polarised representations of motherhood and fixed maternal identities.

Conclusion

Contemporary mythological retellings fundamentally challenge the standards of motherhood. Kane and Miller use their writing as an instrument to deviate from prescribed singular forms of motherhood and to contribute to discussions on feminism. Archetypes are often used as a

device of social control and force unattainable standards on women. Sharon Hays addresses this in her idea work, *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood* “The cultural contradiction between home and world has a long history” (Hays, 1996, p. 3) Society has always disliked contradictions in motherhood because it is exceedingly idealised, leading to the repression of the self. Contrary to popular belief, historically, archetypes were always fluid; this is Neumann’s foundational concept of motherhood. He talks about the metamorphosis that occurs in the space of motherhood; he highlights the overlapping of the good and the bad as aspects of femininity. This conceptualisation was even proposed by Carl Jung, who engages critically with the idea that the mother could be an embodiment of polarities, chaos-nurture, life-death. Jung states, “The loving and terrible mother is the paradoxical Kali.” (Jung, 1971, p. 19) As a society, we are culturally conditioned to hate the destructive and chaotic, embracing only the nurturing aspect because a mother can only be a “moral figure who not only pays her debt to nature by creating life, but also one who protects and fosters it.” (Donath, 2015, p. 22)

Mom shaming is a societal construct that endangers the lived experience of motherhood. The surveillance mothers face is observed by feminists; Patrice DiQuinzio outlines that “feminism cannot claim to give an adequate account of women's lives and to represent women's needs and interests if it ignores the issue of mothering. And to the extent that mothering has been a primary site of women's oppression.” (DiQuinzio, 1999, p.12) Rich explains that “Motherhood has been penal servitude,” she announced. “It need not be.” (Rich, 1976, p. 32) It’s important to recognise that feminists are not rejecting motherhood, but rather the expectations and the demands placed on mothers to be perfect. Writers like Kane and Miller unearth a universal pattern of motherhood that embraces imperfection in motherhood. Their writing switches motherhood from being a site of oppression and gives space for subjective experiences. Their novels approach the negative counterpart as an essential counterpart to the emblematic perfection of the mother archetype. This nuanced depiction views the transition between the positive and negative poles as inevitable; the encounter with the destructive pole is an essential point to achieve psychological oneness.

The intricacies in the narrative structure of Kane and Miller are illuminated through the conceptual lens of Adrienne Rich, who states, “imagination has had to divide women, to see us, and force us to see ourselves, as polarised into good or evil, fertile or barren, pure or impure.” (Rich, 1976, p. 31) Kane and Miller’s narrative structure is shaped in a way that emphasises and displays mothers integrating their nurturing and devouring aspects. Motherhood studies have undeniably contributed to the feminist movement. Patrice DiQuinzio elaborates on this idea “Mothering is both an important site at which the central concepts of feminist theory are elaborated, and a site at which these concepts are challenged and reworked” (DiQuinzio, 1999, p.12) Motherhood studies has become the transformative ground on which ideological deconstruction of the maternal ideal occurs; they revolutionise the maternal system by remodelling gendered identities. Kane and Miller demonstrate the true essence of motherhood and accommodate the diverse experiences which intrinsically transform the feminist dialogue. Rather than confining mothers to social norms, the authors treat them as a foundation where silenced experiences are voiced, where the idea of a fixed maternal identity is deconstructed. The retellings rectify the cultural rejection of emotional complexity in motherhood, thereby becoming a catalyst that enables healthier discussions surrounding the concept of motherhood. Feminist revisionist mythological writing facilitates a more objective construction of maternal identity and embraces the idea of intersecting experiences in motherhood. Kane and Miller’s writing dismantle the fixed binaries and illuminates the multidimensional nature of motherhood. This rendering has not only expanded the field of motherhood studies but also feminism by representing mothers as someone who embodies all aspects of the feminine, the dark and the light, pronouncing the unity between the positive and negative poles as the natural order of life.

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Bio-note

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