



Collage and Erasure Poems: â??Bringing Up Babyâ?•

Description

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â??Bringing up Babyâ?• is a collection of collage and erasure poems about pregnancy and mothering created from felted wool, applique pins, crayon, markers, stickers, photos, book pages, crib placards, pediatrician instructions, language, and family artifacts that function as praise for and critique of (white) mothering. The collection of mother poetry contains two types of collage and erasure poetry: â??What to Expect,â?• which are erasure poems from a pregnancy advice manual (see left side of slide) and â??Baby Book,â?• which includes erasure and collage of feminist texts, my baby book, and material scraps of my daughterâ??s early years.

Bringing up Baby



Bringing up Baby



Sandra Faulkner, "Bringing Up Baby", Collage Poetry, Photoshop

Bringing up Baby

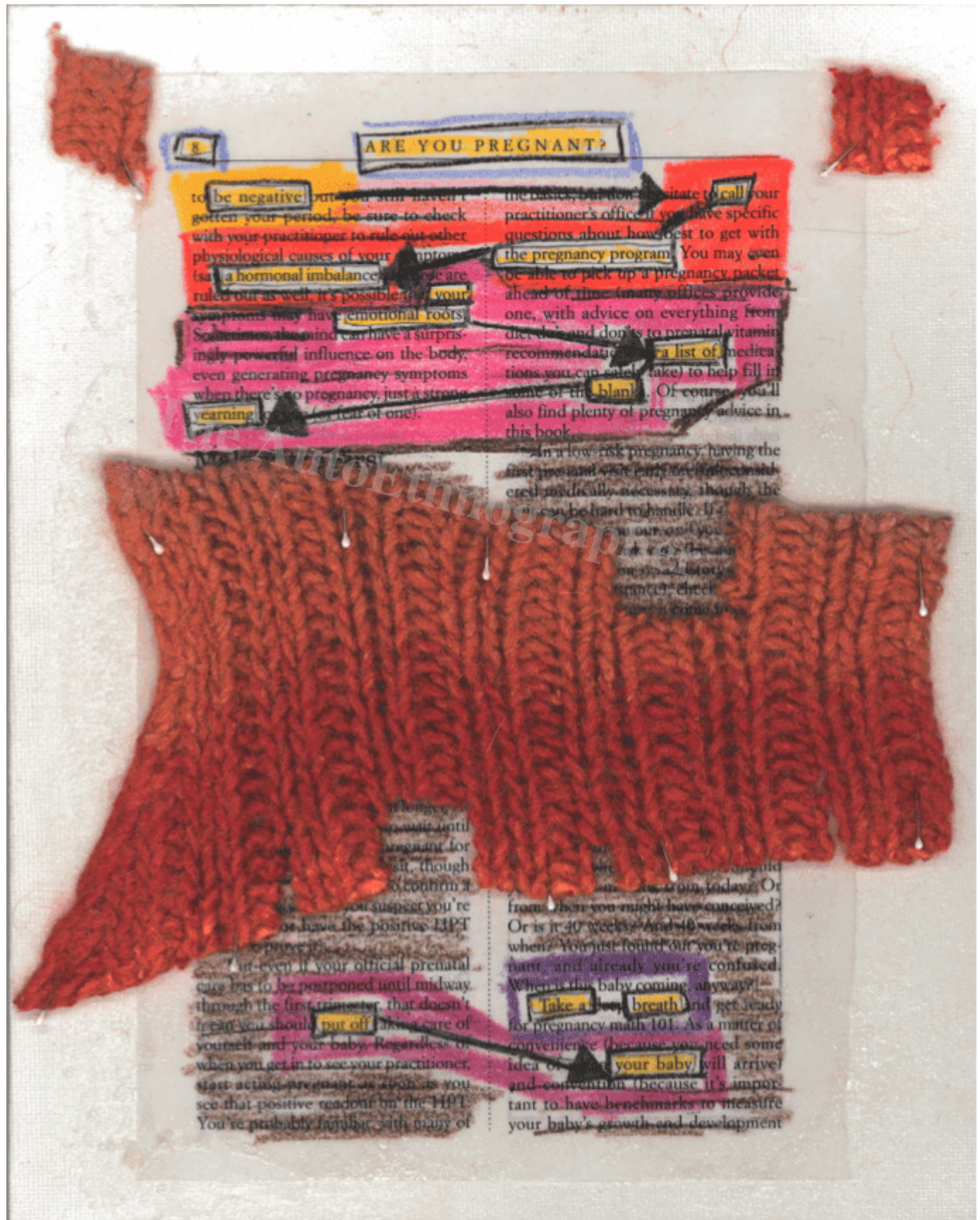
“Was the day I was born the best day of your life? Was the best day of your life when I was born?”
My daughter asks on a scooter ride around the block. I let the dogs sniff the dead squirrel rotting by the neighbor’s tree.

“The demand for happiness is increasingly articulated as a demand to return to social ideals! The belief that happiness should be an effect of following social ideals, almost as if happiness is the reward for a certain loyalty.” (-Sarah Ahmed)

Do not lie. Do not quit.

My mother’s advice, part of me, my body, the way I move through this task of mothering are stitched into my answer.

As I explained in [my recent podcast here at The AutoEthnographer](#), collage can be a form of visual poetry. It can be a form of textual poetry. What it means is that you’re juxtaposing existing elements into something new, so you’re taking preexisting parts and arranging them. Collage poetry can include visual elements. You can juxtapose different texts like found poetry and cut up poetry and include different visual elements. The idea is that collage contains a mix of visual, audio, and textual components, and it’s great for when you want to create some kind of multi-dimensional work, and you know this can work well on the page. It can also work well 3-dimensionally. We could also think about incorporating elements of video as well.



Are You Pregnant?

be negative call
 the pregnancy program
a hormonal imbalance

 your
 emotional tools

 a list of
blank

yearning

The AutoEthnographer

Take a breath

put off

your baby

ARE YOU PREGNANT?

these HPTs can work—they're sensitive, but not always that sensitive. One week after conception there's hCG in your urine, but it's not enough for the HPT to pick up, which means that if you test 7 days before your expected period, you're likely to get a false negative even if you're pregnant.

Just can't wait to pee on that stick? Some tests promise 90 to 95 percent accuracy 1 to 7 days before your expected period. Not a betting man? Wait until the day your period is expected and you'll have up to a 99 percent chance of spotting a HPT result. Whenever you do, don't make the testing plunge. The good news is that false positives are much less common than false negatives—which means that if your test is positive, you can be, too. (The exception: if you've recently had fertility treatment, see box, page 6.)

Some HPTs can tell you not only that you're pregnant but also approximately how far along you are in your pregnancy, displaying along with the word "pregnant" the estimated weeks since ovulation—either 1 to 2 weeks, 2 to 3 weeks, or 3 or more weeks since your tiny egg was fertilized by your partner's sperm. Operate word "approximately"—so don't use this result to calculate your oft-rehearsed due date. Also on the market: an HPT that's app-compatible.

No matter what type of HPT you use, even budget brand basic to super high-tech, you'll get a very accurate diagnosis very early in pregnancy, and that early heads-up can give you an early head start on taking the best possible care of yourself. Still, medical follow-up to the test is essential, so if the result is positive, it's time to call your practitioner and book that first prenatal appointment.

Testing for the Irregular

Some women don't exactly *scribble* on a calendar that it make scheduling your HPT testing date a lot harder. After all, how can you test on the day that your period is expected if you're never sure when that day will come? Your best testing strategy if your periods are irregular is to wait the number of days equal to the longest cycle you've had in the last 6 months (hopefully you've been keeping track on an app!)—and then test. If the result is negative and you still haven't gotten your period, wait at the test after a week (or after a few days if you just can't wait).

The blood test. This more sophisticated blood pregnancy test can detect pregnancy with virtually 100 percent accuracy as early as 1 week after conception, using just a few drops of blood. It can also help approximately date the pregnancy by measuring the exact amount of hCG in the blood, since hCG values change as pregnancy progresses (see page 144 for more on hCG levels). Many practitioners order both a urine test and a blood test to be doubly certain of the diagnosis.

The medical exam. Though a medical exam can be performed to confirm the diagnosis of a pregnancy, today's accurate HPTs and blood tests make the exam—which looks for physical signs of pregnancy such as changes in the vagina and cervix, and a change in the structure of the uterus—almost beside the point. Still, getting that first exam and beginning regular prenatal care isn't (see page 8).

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Sandra Faulkner, "Are You Pregnant? 5", Erasure Poetry with crayon, pencil, paper, and knit sweater

ARE YOU PREGNANT? 5

pee on that
promise
Wait the number of days
 in the last 6 months
plunge
your test
 with a few drops of blood
your tiny
 diagnosis
a
 physical sign
 color the vagina
test the cervix

My Creative Collage and Erasure Process

In the "What to Expect"¹ pieces, I use erasure and collage with pages from *What to Expect When You Are Expecting*, a popular guide to pregnancy and childbirth that I found insulting, highly heterosexist and hegemonic when I was gifted it by my Obstetrician's office. At first, I read the guide to be a good pregnant woman and new mother who is self-abnegating and completely fulfilled by feminine breeding, but it was frustrating and made me feel more than inadequate. I finally quit advice manuals when my daughter was 4 months old.





Sandra Faulkner, "Nine Months", Erasure Poetry with crayon, pencil, paper, and knit sweater

Nine Months

read the small print

honey sugar you
can suspect

to

be separated

I created six pieces using the pages of the book that correspond to my birthday and my daughter's birthday. Using leftover crayons and pencils from my daughter's art projects to erase some words and highlight others, I tell another more nuanced story of pregnancy, the story of an ambivalent, though intended pregnancy. I also recycled pieces of a sweater I knit that accidentally got felted in the wash.

BIRTH DAY

The queer child is an unhappy object
for many parents...

happiness provides the emotional
setting for disappointment...

we just have to
expect happiness

from 'this or that'

for 'this or that'

to be experienceable

as disappointment. -Ahmed

length 20 3/4"
color of eyes blue
color of hair reddish blonde
amount moderate
complexion fair
cried a lot
quiet most of the time
feedings 4 ozs five times a day
shape of head perfect
birthmarks none

Dr. Mousakhani

Dr. Mousakhani

Child's name Miriam Fyller

Height 31 1/2" Weight 9 1/2 lbs HC 14 1/2" Date 4/3/00

Percent for Height percentile 54 %

It was an indoor hospital day
full of induced labor with no pain meds

I thought of death
during the 4-week wait,
the detaching placenta

hooked to the medical model

the first picture

It was a warm, sunshiny day and a
trip to the hospital a very fast, he
one. He arrived an hour and three
quarters before the birth.

BIRTH DAY

**The queer child is an unhappy object
for many parents...**

**happiness provides the emotional
setting for disappointment...**

**we just have to
expect happiness**

from 'this or that'

for 'this or that'

to be experienceable

as disappointment. -Ahmed

Birth date 2024
length 20.3"
color of eyes blue
color of hair reddish blonde
amount moderate
complexion fair
cried a lot no
quiet most of the time
feedings 4 ozs five times a day
shape of head perfect
birthmarks none

11 lbs. 1 oz. 21 in.
13 lbs. 6 oz. 24 in.
15 lbs. 1 oz. 26 in.
16 lbs. 1 oz. 28 in.
18 lbs. 11 oz. 31 in.
21 lbs. 8 oz. 34 in.
21 lbs. 8 oz. 34 in.

Dr. Mousakhani
Dr. Mousakhani
Dr. Mousakhani
Dr. Mousakhani
Dr. Mousakhani
Dr. Mousakhani
Dr. Mousakhani

Child's name Miriam Fyllou
Height 31.25" Weight 9lb/10oz HC 34.5cm Date 11/3/20
Percentile for Height percentile 54 %

**It was an indoor hospital day
full of induced labor with no pain meds**

I thought of death

during the 4-week wait,

the detaching placenta

hooked to the medical model

the first picture

It was a warm, sunshiny day and a trip to the hospital a very fast, he one. She arrived an hour and three quarters before the birth.

Sandra Faulkner, "Birth Day", Collage Poetry, Photoshop

Birth Day

The queer child is an unhappy object for many parents!
happiness provides the emotional setting for disappointment!
we just have to
expect happiness
from "this or that"
for "this or that"
to be experienceable as disappointment. (-Sarah Ahmed)

It was an indoor hospital day
full of induced labor with no pain meds
I thought of death
during the 4-week wait,
the detaching placenta
hooked to the medical model

Critiquing Dominant Narratives

The resultant erasure collage allows for a range of feelings about pregnancy and critique dominant narratives of pregnancy and childbirth. "Collage could be seen as an enactment of deterritorialization in that creating a collage, one takes something from its recognizable territory and distorts it into new forms" (Smartt Gullion, 2019, p. 163). Using collage as poetic inquiry and Halberstam's (1998) idea of scavenger methodology, I re-story and create (or distort) a different kind of a baby book, family history, mothering, and mother's work. A scavenger methodology queers our research endeavors through the combination of different methods that have been traditionally excluded from research on

human behavior, especially those that are seemingly oppositional.

Battle of the B-F Girls

Release the thirty-seven years between mothers who can't win

Every sentence begins I'm a (bf!) GIRL

modern formulas that eliminate mixing and sterilizing

Similac and Similac With Iron

Argue which nipple is best—bottle-fed by the modern mother

Suck the modern formula for the modern mother

you know the modern way

Trust success of this baby girl business in seven steps

I'm a GIRL!

I'm a Breastfed Girl!

My Name M. Faulkner

My Birthdate/Time August 19, 2009 @ 5:54pm

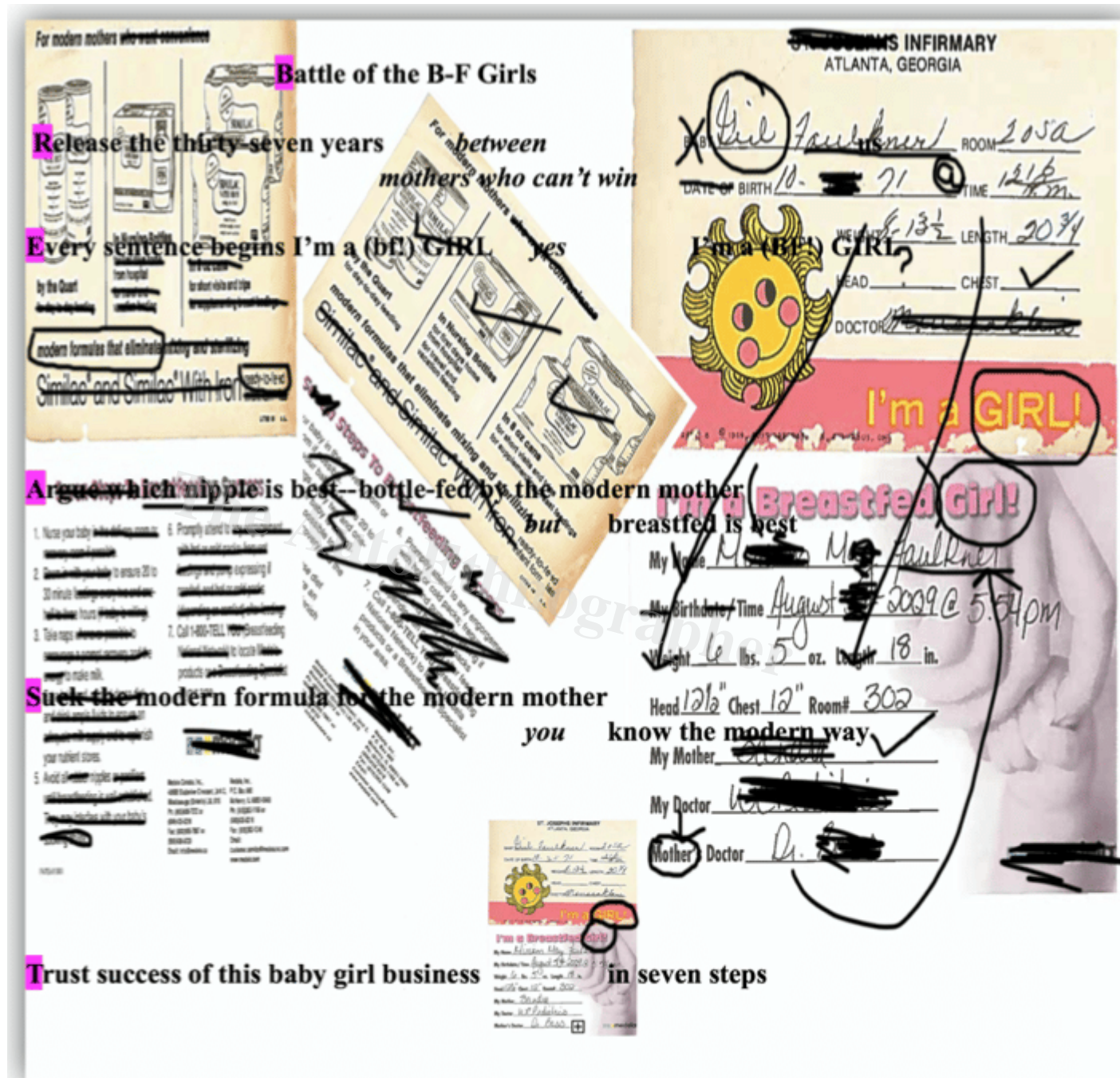
Weight 6 lbs. 5 oz. **Length** 18 in.

Head 12 1/2" **Chest** 12" **Room#** 302

My Mother [redacted]

My Doctor [redacted]

Mother Doctor [redacted]



Sandra Faulkner, â??Battle of the B-F Girlsâ?•, Collage Poetry, Photoshop

Battle of the B-F Girls

Look at the placards from our hospital cribs,
the directions for breast/bottle
feeding success. The pressure

from the institutions that know

best. You can't win.

Breast is best, but bottle is modern.

Battle of the B-F Girls

Release the thirty-seven years *between* us
mothers who can't win

Every sentence begins I'm a (bf!) GIRL yes I'm a (BF!) GIRL

Argue which nipple is best bottle-fed by the modern mother
but breastfed is best

Suck the modern formula for the modern mother
you know the modern way

Trust success of this baby girl business in seven steps
bf girl and/or bf girl

The use of nontraditional scholarly materials—poetic language, fiber, family artifacts—and means of presentation and insisting this is research queer what is considered interpersonal communication methodology. —Collage is particularly well suited to arts-based researchers who seek to uncover, juxtapose, and transform multiple meanings and perspectives and to integrate different aspects of a person or phenomena through embodied, multisensorial processes— (Scotti & Chilton, 2017, p. 360). The collage form is a way to play with image and text, to expand the possibilities of text and story to show how poetic inquiry on mothering, family, and cultural history shape the poetic voice and how poetic voice is a form of feminist theorizing and an example of interpersonal feminist scholarship (Manning & Denker, 2015).

TELEPHONE:
DAY OR NIGHT

DATE 12-20-71 AGE 2 mos
HEIGHT 23 CHEST 15 1/2
WEIGHT 11 1/2 HEAD 15 1/2

Any feeding concerns?
Are you putting anything in your baby's bottle?
When awake, does your baby spend time sucking on his/her thumb?

Cereal
fruits

Be Active

Child's name DD ACTIVE W
Height 21.5 in Weight 9 lbs 10 oz HC 14.5 Date 11-7-29
Weight for Height percentile 54 % 70

vegetables / lunch

- Encourage your baby to walk.
- Avoid giving your baby any electronic devices not recommended under age 2.

vegetables
cereal
fruits
dinner
4-6
daily

- **Do not** baby **you** older **than** 1 year, his or she will no longer between feedings and take more **feeding**.
- **Most** babies take 4-6 **oz** of **breastmilk** or formula and feed 4-5 times **per day** by the time they are 4 months old.
- **Not all** crying means hunger.
- **Continue** to use a 4-oz bottle.
- **Wait** until at least 4 months to start cereal.
- **DO NOT** **put** cereal in the bottle.
- **DO NOT** give your baby honey.

Advice

Sandra L. Faulkner
Collage and Erasure Poems: "Bringing Up Baby" •

Feeding

2 months

Any feeding concerns?

Are you putting anything in your baby's bottle

When awake, does your baby spend time

BE ACTIVE

Encourage your baby to kick

time not recommended under age 2

baby go longer between

feedings

by 4 months old

crying means hunger

continue

wait 4 months to start cereal

Do Not

Do Not give your baby honey

Advice

Feeding Concerns?

Concerned feeding.

Feeding the list

of too little,

too much,

and never enough.

The "Baby Book" Collage

In the "Baby Book" collages, I juxtapose images, text, and reflections from my unfinished baby book and my daughter's never begun baby book in a reimagined scrapbook wherein two mothers—my mother and me—converse in lines of poetry about being mother and the white middle-class expectations of motherhood that mean a mother is never good enough. I use pages from my baby book that my mother filled in, notes from my pediatrician and my daughter's pediatrician on feeding,

sonogram images, and text from feminist theory. Most of the pieces are done in Photoshop, though one of the pieces was an erasure poem made with stickers from the pediatrician's office and washable child markers.





Sandra Faulkner, "Food Thought", Collage Poetry, Photoshop

Food Thought

Feeding Concerns?

Are you putting anything in your bottle?

baby spend time

Feeding

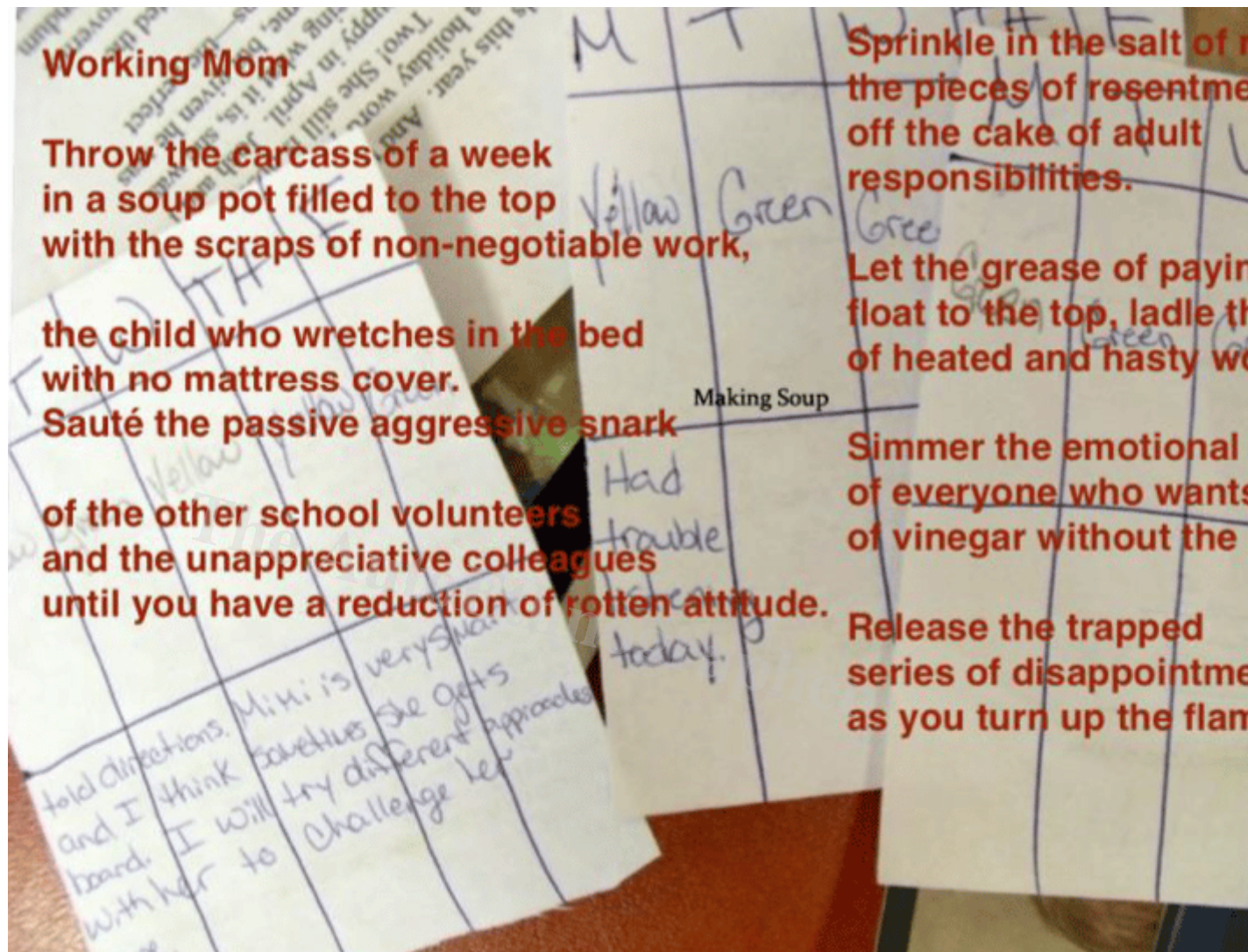
get older and bigger
take more
take breastmilk or formula

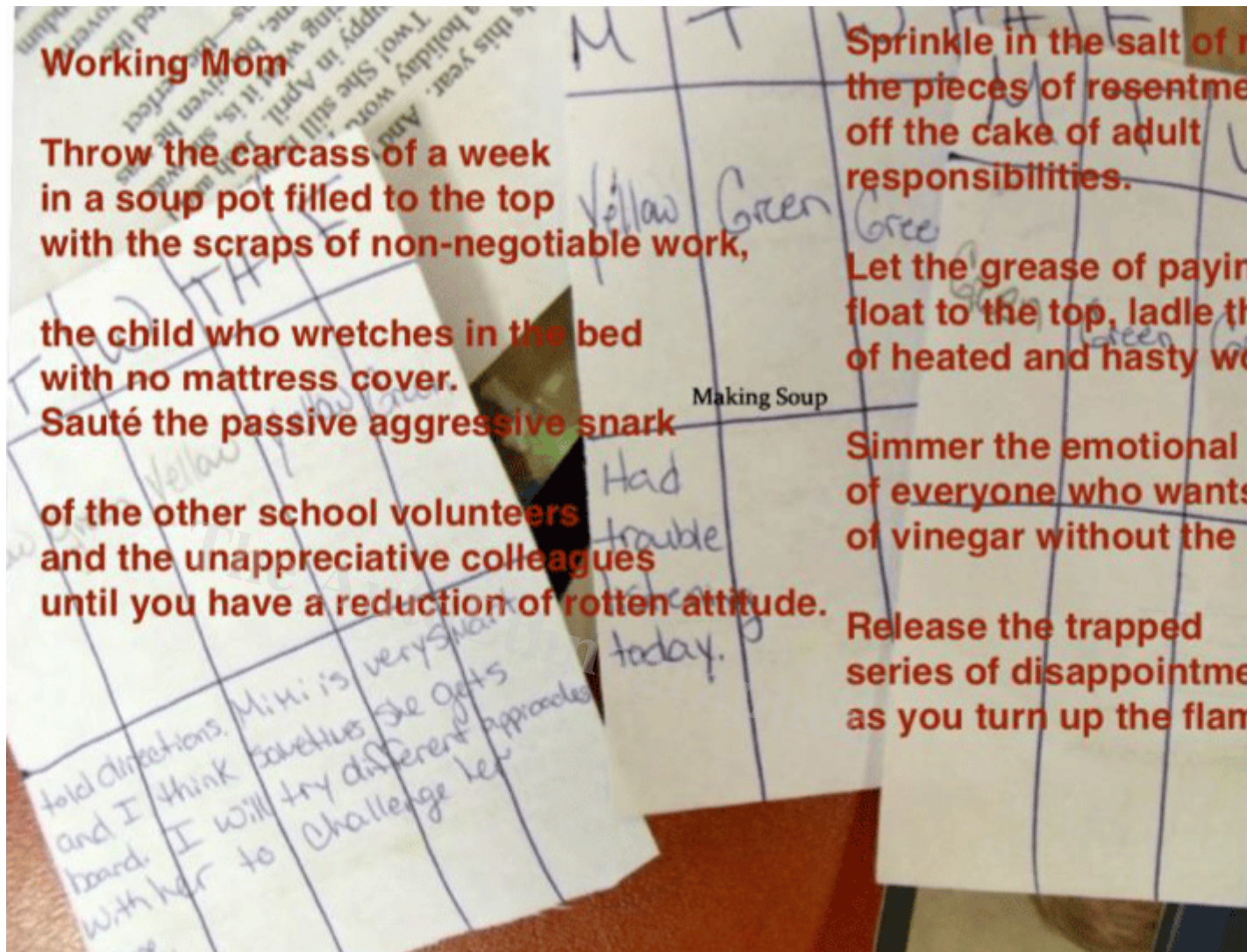
Crying means hunger
continue to use
Wait months to start

DO NOT bottle
DO NOT
Be active
Encourage reach kick
Screen time

The erasure collages â??serve as a kind of queer *Pinterest* scrapbook that critique and interrogate expectations and attitudes about what mothers should do, think, and feel. Good mothers in a pro-natalist culture should channel their creativity into things like making scrapbooks of their progenyâ?• (Faulkner, 2017, p. 166). Good academics should act as if they do not have children and certainly said children should not disrupt and make messy service, teaching, and research activities (Faulkner, 2012; Huopalainen & Satama, 2018).

The poems show the dialectics of being mother and academic, poet and scholar, feminist and knitter and discourses of good (white) mother and bad mother, feminist academic and everyday mom.





Sandra Faulkner, "Working Mom", Collage Poetry, Photoshop

Working Mom

Throw the carcass of a week
in a soup pot filled to the top
with the scraps of non-negotiable work,

the child who wretches in the bed
with no mattress cover.

Sauté the passive aggressive snark

of the other school volunteers
and the unappreciative colleagues
until you have a reduction of rotten attitude.

Sprinkle in the salt of
the pieces of resentment
off the cake of adult
responsibilities.

Let the grease of paying
float to the top, ladle the
of heated and hasty work.

Simmer the emotional
of everyone who wants
of vinegar without the

Release the trapped
series of disappointments
as you turn up the flame.

Sprinkle in the salt of rejection,
the pieces of resentment flaked
off the cake of adult
responsibilities.

Let the grease of paying bills
float to the top, ladle the scum
of heated and hasty words.

Simmer the emotional hegemony
of everyone who want the mother
of vinegar without the pucker.

Release the trapped series of disappointments
as you turn up the flame.

Collage Poetry as Storytelling and Feminist Work

The use of poetry as a form of storytelling and feminist work provides a way to show dialectics and tensions in family life and provide alternatives to the status quo by critiquing taken-for-granted social structures and assumptions about relational life. The confessional in poetry focuses attention on embodied experience through highlighting dualistic thinking, especially that which focuses on the body, the domestic sphere, and mothering (Faulkner, 2017b, p. 103).





Sandra Faulkner, "Are You Pregnant?", Erasure Poetry with crayon, pencil, paper, and knit sweater

Are You Pregnant?

Everybody knows

that
transition from fertilized egg to

infertility specialist

you face

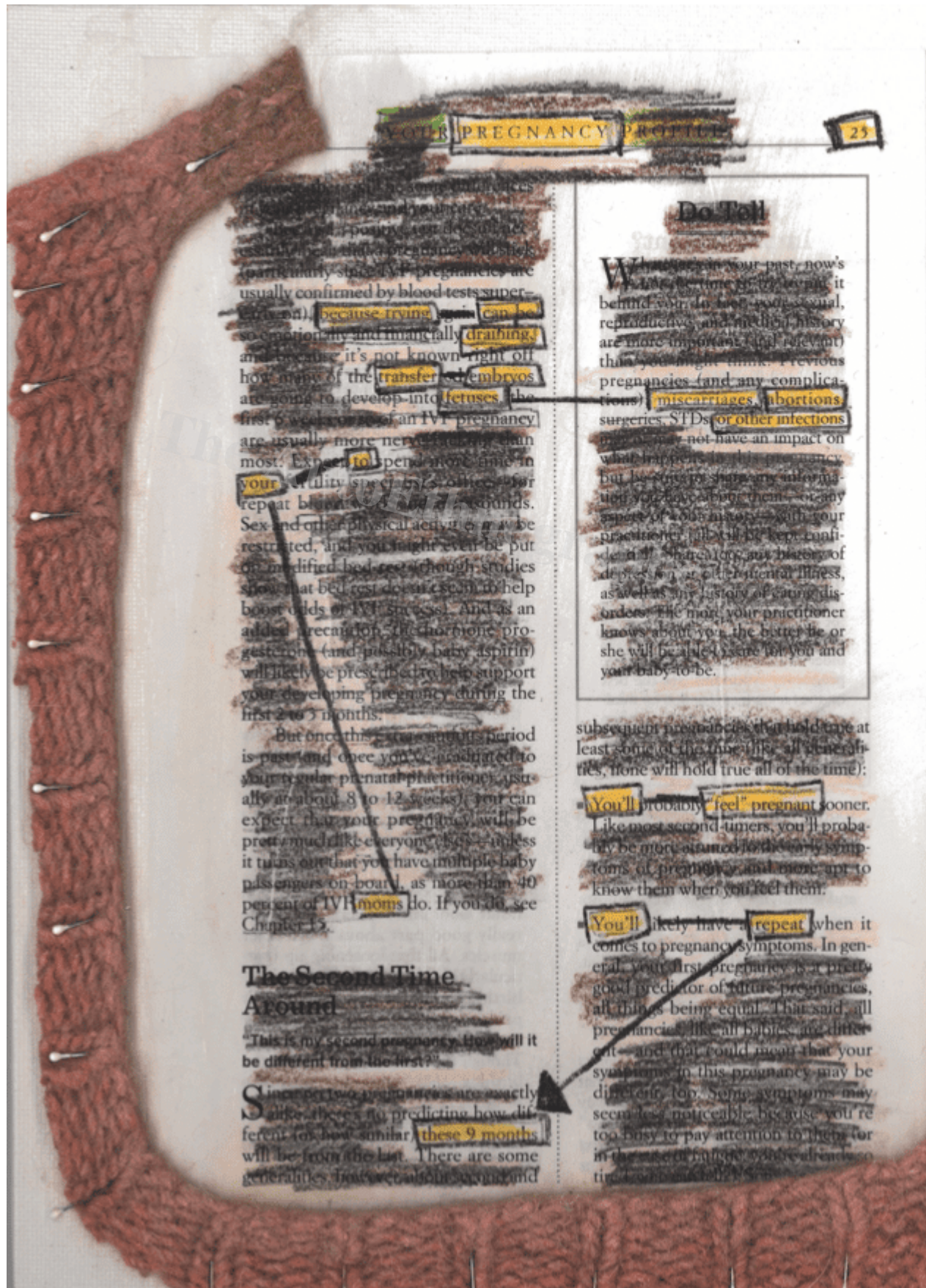
the first trimester

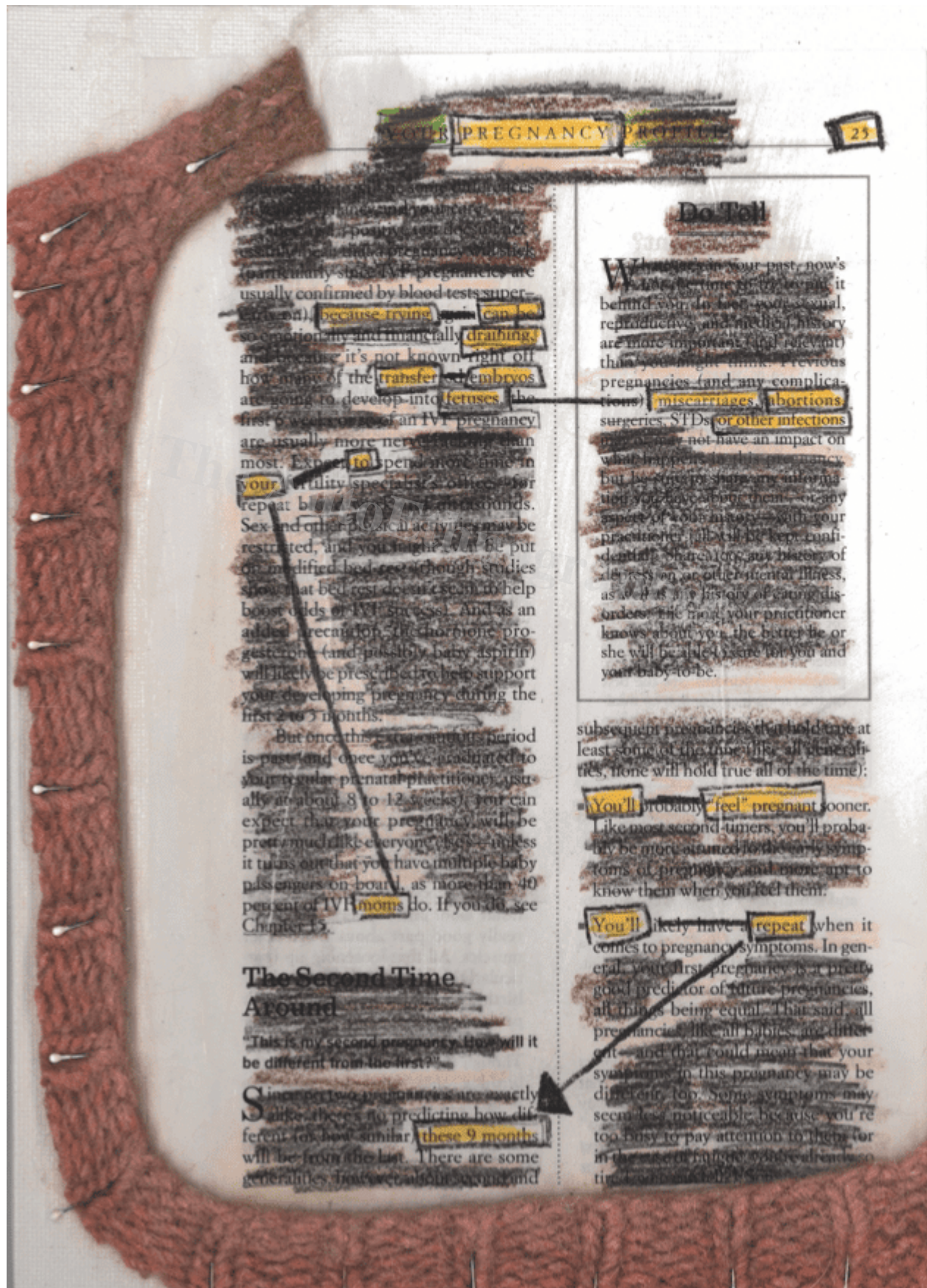
like

you're

not convinced

Poetry, as a form, offers a unique way of being able to position and engage dialectics and to uncover taken-for-granted social structures and assumptions about relational life. "Bringing Up Baby" uses erasure to bring forth voices of ambivalence, anger, and disgust not seen in official discourse of pregnancy advice books and medical advice. My positionalities as a white/middle-class/bisexual/ambivalent mother/daughter, academic, romantic partner, and poet influence what I saw in the texts and what I brought out of the shadows. I use erasure as "creative imagination" to remind us that re-vision is what keeps vision from hardening into dogma. (Steinorth, 2021, p. xi).





Sandra Faulkner, "Pregnancy," Erasure Poetry with crayon, pencil, paper, and knit sweater

Pregnancy

because trying can be
 draining

transfer embryos
 fetuses miscarriages abortions
 or other infections

 to

your

 Youâ??ll feel pregnant

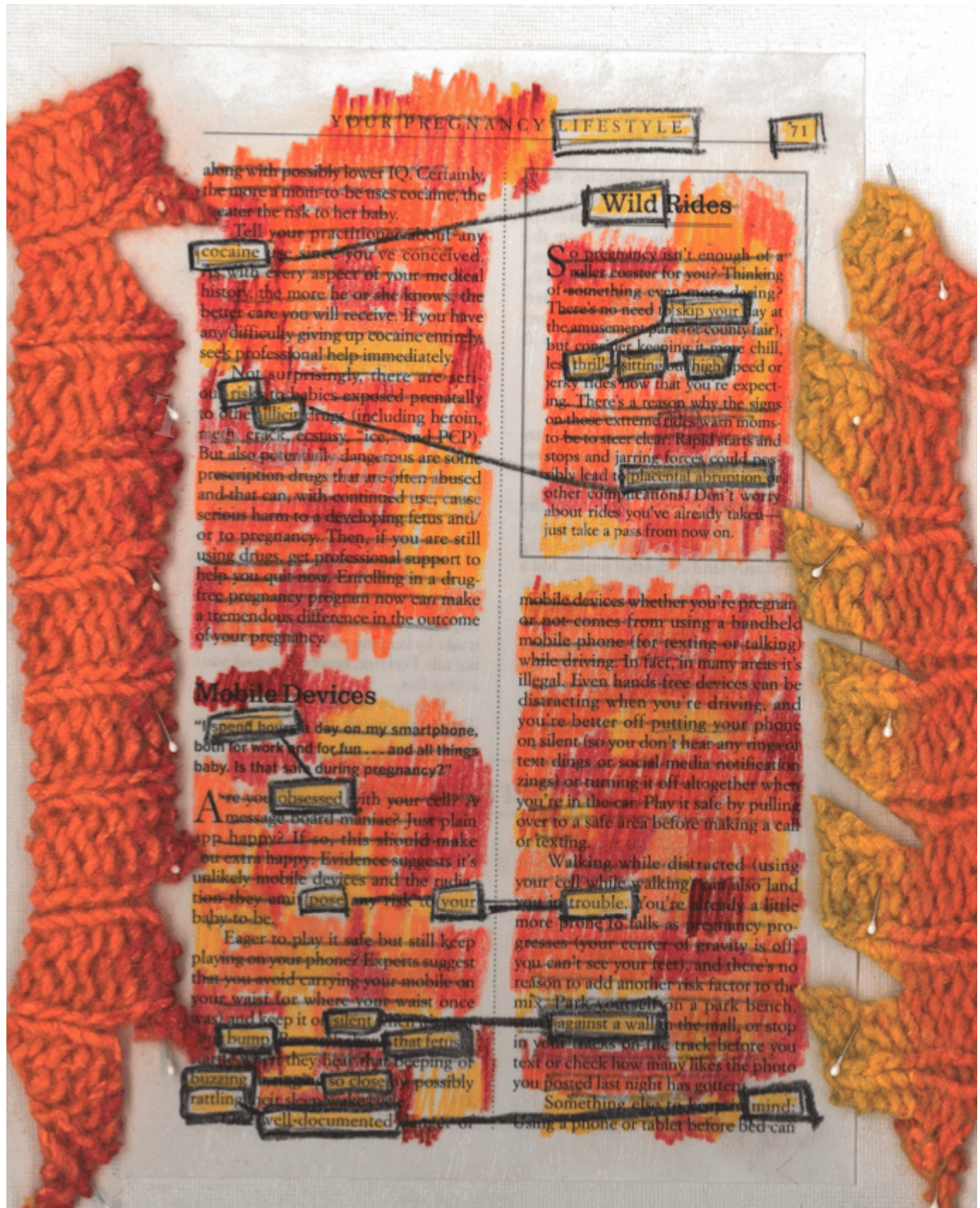
moms

 Youâ??ll repeat

these 9 months

The AutoEthnographer

The pieces show places of privilegeâ??leisure time to craft because of job security, having good health insurance, the money to send a child to daycare, and being read as (mostly) a good mother because of being highly educated, white, and partnered. They also show my wrestling with insipid parenting advice and expectations that to be a good (white/middleclass) mother I should spend 110% of my energy and time to turn my child into a baby Einstein. â??The most interesting poetry by mothers about motherhood attempts to express the complexity of this multifaceted emotional and physical experienceâ?• (Souffrant, 2009, p. 26). I use erasure to free words from â??the ossified importance of the authorizedâ?• medical community, free them from the dogma of dominant discourse about mothering and motherhood â??to imply fresh meanings,â?• possibilities, understanding (Souffrant, 2009, p. 26).





Sandra Faulkner, Lifestyle 71, Erasure Poetry with crayon, pencil, paper, and knit sweater

Lifestyle 71

Wild

cocaine

skip your

thrill hitting high

risk

illicit

placental abruption

spend hours

obsessed

pose

your

trouble

bump

that fetus

silent

against a wall

buzzing

so close

rattling

well-documented

mind

To conclude, the use of poetry as a form of storytelling and feminist work provides CFIC researchers, teacher, and practitioners with a way to show dialectics and tensions in family life, provide alternatives to the status quo by critiquing taken-for-granted social structures and assumptions about relational life (Suter, 2018). The use of erasure and collage as mother poetry, in particular, shows how this poet scholar wrestled with the ambivalence of too much advice and not enough of the right kind of pregnancy and mothering advice. It shows how mothering and motherhood, writing and being an academic, and being a poet and a partner are not uniformly positive or negative experiences, but experiences that we perpetually write and live into existence (Faulkner, 2016).

[LISTEN TO SANDRA'S PODCAST](#)

Acknowledgements

Source Texts for erasure poems: Murkoff, H. and Mazel, S. (2016). *What to expect when you're expecting* (5th ed), p.8. New York: Workman Publishing

.â??Feedingâ?; â??Food Thoughtâ?; â??Bringing Up Babyâ?• first appeared in MotherWork collage (A queer scrapbook). *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking*, 4(1), 166-179.
doi:10.14321/qed.4.1.0166

â??Birth Dayâ?• first appeared in *The Journal of Compressed Creative Arts*.
<http://matterpress.com/journal/>

â??Battle of the B-F Girlsâ?• first appeared in *Ratâ??s Ass Review*, 2. Available at
http://ratsassreview.net/?page_id=879#Faulkner.

Working Mom appeared as â??Making Soupâ?• in *Ithaca Lit*. Spring 2017. Available at
<http://ithacalit.com/sandra-faulkner.html>

10 ARE YOU PREGNANT? first appeared in *Slippery Elm*.

â??Are You Pregnant?,â?• â??Nine Months,â?• and â??Life Styleâ?• first appeared in *S/tick Magazine*.

Category

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