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MOTHERHOOD ACCORDING TO MARTHA GRAHAM:
DANCING JOCASTA¹

INTRODUCTION: DANCE AND THE MATERNAL SEMIOTIC

At the end of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, after the guilt-ridden king has blinded himself, a messenger from the palace brings news to the chorus and to the audience. He announces: "[Oedipus] is calling for someone to open the [palace] doors wide / So that all the children of Kadmos may look upon / His father's murderer, his mother's—no, / I can not say it!" (58). While the messenger can speak of Oedipus' patricide, words fail him when he should speak of Oedipus' incestuous relationship with his mother Jocasta. In 1947, American modern dancer Martha Graham choreographed the corporeal details of this unspeakable and unwritten incest in *Night Journey*, which retells the Oedipus myth from the mother's perspective.² In her autobiography, Graham writes of this dance:

Night Journey . . . is a dance between Jocasta and Oedipus, mother and son. It is a highly erotic dance. I have never believed in the necessity of interpreting either music or story in dance. I believe in writing a script of movement or a musician writing a script of music. (Graham 212-213)

In her choreography—literally her “dance-writing”—Graham writes the script for the scene that could not be written in Sophocles’ script, the event which the messenger “can not say.” Not only could it not be said, it could not be seen. In Sophocles’ play, and typical of Greek drama, the main acts of horror take place off stage, such as Oedipus’ self-blinding, Jocasta’s suicide, and Jocasta and Oedipus’ incest together. In Sophocles’ text we only hear that these events have happened through the speaking and singing of the chorus (Jowitt in Altshuler, 34; Jowitt, *Time* 225).

In *Night Journey*³ Graham reduces Sophocles’ cast to Jocasta, Oedipus, the blind seer Tiresias, and a chorus of seven female dancers including a chorus leader which she called The Daughters of the Night. Graham sets *Night Journey* not on the public steps of the palace at Thebes as in Sophocles, but in the interior and intimate space of Jocasta’s bedchamber.⁴ The décor, by sculptor Isamu Noguchi, includes a grim, bonelike, surrealist bed placed upstage center and angled so the audience can see all that takes place upon it. As revisionist myth, Graham’s *Night Journey* foregrounds Jocasta’s perspective: in contrast to all the other characters, Jocasta never exits the stage, and she dances downstage—that is, closer to the audience—more than anyone else (Burt 49; Morris 75-76). The dance begins at the moment in the play right before Jocasta hangs herself after learning she had unknowingly slept with her son and bore his children. As the curtain rises, we see Jocasta holding a rope over her head, softly swaying her body as if already hanged when Tiresias enters from the back solemnly zigzagging his way downstage toward her. The dance then transitions into an extended flashback in which Jocasta recounts Oedipus’ arrival, their sexual adventures, the discovery of his identity, and his blinding. Throughout the work, the chorus of dancing women plays different roles: mimicking Jocasta’s movement, announcing Oedipus’ entry, protectively surrounding Jocasta. As the dance concludes, we shift back to the present to finally witness her suicide.⁵ The majority of this approximately twenty-eight-minute dance consists of Oedipus and Jocasta’s erotic duet (but in the moments before and after we also see a powerful, introspective, and mournful Jocasta contemplating her fate). Significantly, Graham’s *Night Journey* omits

from Sophocles the attempted infanticide against the baby Oedipus, the riddle of the Sphinx, the Theban plague, and the patricide (Yaari 228), the tale which Sophocles thoroughly inscribed in his script by having Oedipus and a witness recount in detail the former’s murder of his father Laius: its location, its time, the number of men involved. The only Oedipal crime danced in *Night Journey* is the coupling of mother and son.

Oedipus’ relationship to his mother in Sophocles’ foundational text has shaped western constructions of sexual difference, particularly through interpretations by twentieth-century psychoanalysis. In the classical psychoanalytic account of the Oedipal phase, the male child must decathect from his mother and disavow the incestuous fantasies he has of her or else endure the father’s retribution, i.e., castration. This account describes the mechanism by which the *male* child then establishes his subjectivity in opposition to the mother from whom he separates. In contrast, Graham’s *Night Journey*—explicitly focused on the mother’s taboo eroticism—reinterprets the Oedipus myth in terms of establishing a female and specifically *maternal* subjectivity. To understand Graham’s revolutionary reading of the Oedipus myth and what is at stake regarding questions of sexual difference,⁶ I turn to the work of Julia Kristeva. In the realm of theory, Kristeva has essentially followed the same strategy as Graham: Kristeva’s ongoing project has been to reclaim maternal subjectivity from the Oedipal triangle by focusing on the mother’s bodily responses in the pre-Oedipal relationship between her and the infant (Litowitz 57). Throughout her writings on maternal subjectivity, Kristeva has been concerned with bearing witness to maternal *jouissance* and does so most recently with her work on maternal eroticism—a concept, as she points out, which is as taboo today as the concept of infantile sexuality in Sigmund Freud’s day (“Reliance” 69).

Through Kristeva’s work we can begin to understand why incest is unspeakable for Sophocles whose messenger “can not say it,” and why, by implication, he considers incest *worse* than the patricide which can be spoken.⁷ The implicit locus of Sophocles’ bias is the erotic maternal body which surfaces explicitly in an act of incest. Kristeva writes in “Stabat Mater” that mother’s *jouissance*

threatens the Symbolic because it makes her a subject and not an “other” against whom male subjectivity can be founded (Kristeva, “Stabat Mater” 259; Oliver 50). Patricide, by contrast, while taboo, is the male child’s usurpation of the father’s authority, but patricide’s misdirected violence does not threaten the subjectivity of men in general. If male subjectivity in the Symbolic is defined in opposition to the maternal body, then that which is associated with the maternal body becomes abject. In her book *The Powers of Horror* (1980), Kristeva interrogates “the horror of incest,” a phrase she borrows from Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* (1913), and the underlying fear of the maternal body it represents. Symbolic culture, in its present form, is built to keep the horror of incest at bay. A feeling of abjection, a visceral sense of revulsion, appears when the sense of order and identity established through the Symbolic is violated. The abject fear of falling back into the mother’s womb and of losing autonomy, Kristeva argues, is generalized to a fear of woman, and hence the repression of women in culture. This psychodrama is played out again and again in the social realm through the regulation of women’s bodies, especially the maternal body, in society and law.

How can we rethink and restore maternal subjectivity rather than “othering” and abjecting the mother? This is a question that concerns Kristeva and ultimately, I argue, Graham as well. At the core of the mother’s subjectivity for both Kristeva and Graham is her eroticism. Rosemary Balsam explains that in Kristeva’s most recent work on maternity titled “Reliance, or Maternal Eroticism” (2011, trans. 2014), eroticism works in service of procreation and (sexually stimulating) interactions with the infant; thus Kristeva’s latest theory moves us to a mature female sexuality that accounts for the drive to conceive and life with the baby (Balsam 90, 95, 98). Bonnie Litowitz points out that in contrast to both the object relations model, which risks reducing the mother to a holding container or sublimating her, and to postmodern theories of gender construction, which read the mother’s body as a mere site for cultural inscription, Kristeva bears witness to embodied maternal subjectivity (Litowitz 58), as well as “the passionate violence of maternal experience” (Kristeva, “Motherhood Today”). It is the passionate, violent, and erotic maternal body that Graham spotlights in *Night Journey*. Dance

critic and scholar Sally Banes sees *Night Journey* as emphasizing maternal desire and sexual passion and women’s sexual pleasure: “. . . the dance, however bitter, is also a celebration of mature female sexuality . . .” (157).

Using Kristeva’s classic and recent texts on maternity, I argue that through her “dance-writing” Graham writes the hitherto unwritten story of maternal eroticism through the form and movement of *Night Journey*. Furthermore, because her script of movement for Jocasta writes precisely those moments unwritten in Sophocles, Graham’s dance draws attention to the fact that the erotic maternal body has been largely repressed within the Symbolic order and specifically in the western tradition of writing. Kristeva’s classic distinction between “the semiotic” and “the symbolic” modalities in language, explicated in *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1974) and recurring throughout her work, can offer insight into understanding *Night Journey* as a revolutionary poetic language of movement that bears witness to maternal eroticism. For Kristeva, in opposition to Jacques Lacan, there is an order before the paternal Symbolic order of culture into which the child is inducted through the Oedipal phase, and there is a language before language proper. Kristeva argues that order, regulation, language, and writing are all prefigured in the pre-Oedipal bodily relationship between the infant and the mother. For example, the rhythm and syntax of language find their precedent in the rhythmic, tactile, kinesthetic, and bodily interactions between the infant and the mother, such as holding, feeding, and rocking. Thus the communication, order, and meaning generated in this preverbal, bodily infant-mother relationship lay the foundation onto which symbolic language is later grafted. Kristeva’s term for the visceral, corporeal, and affective dimension of both language and writing rooted in the archaic relationship with the mother’s body is “the semiotic.” “The symbolic,” by contrast, consists of the grammar, logic, and denotations that we generally associate with language proper. Language, both written and spoken, is always for Kristeva an intertwining of the symbolic and the semiotic (*Revolution* 23-24) and is therefore a “trans-substantiation” in which word and body inhabit each sign (“Place Names” 291).

However, while the semiotic is always operative in language, it is rarely acknowledged because of its intimate connection to the abject maternal body. As Fanny Söderbäck explains: “. . . the maternal body, for Kristeva, . . . is repressed. Insofar as we speak of maternity as a certain kind of corporeal-temporal experience—manifested in the rhythms and oscillations that emerge through the semiotic modality of language—it is, in Kristeva’s account, to a large extent made invisible to the point of erasure in our culture” (82). The cultural erasure of the maternal body underscores the importance of Graham’s visible rendering of maternal eroticism in *Night Journey*. Söderbäck writes that Kristeva calls for “a more integrated and balanced relationship between the two modalities of language: maternal and paternal, semiotic and symbolic. The interdependence between the two, for her, is a fact. The question remains whether we are willing to acknowledge and embrace this interdependence and give voice to both” (Söderbäck 79). In this paper I hope to show how through the symbolic medium of dance, Graham indeed gives voice to the semiotic.

The semiotic gives writing, art, poetry, and, as I argue, dance, their affective dimension. The following description of dance by phenomenologist and dancer Sondra Horton Fraleigh sounds very similar, in fact, to Kristeva’s account of the semiotic: “[Dance] is a preverbal expression, playing beneath words and at the same time moving beyond them. . . . As impetus toward speech proper, dance founds meaning; thus it is closer to the immediacy, rhythm, and origination of poetry than it is to linear language” (Horton Fraleigh 71, 73). This impetus toward speech, the foundation of meaning, and the immediacy and rhythm that Horton Fraleigh describes are all manifestations of the semiotic at work in dance. Dance, a cultural medium within the realm of the Symbolic that is focused on the body, can give voice to the corporeal and maternal semiotic substrate of language. This is particularly the case for Graham’s *Night Journey* which explicitly writes the unwritten story of the erotic maternal body.

THE VAGINAL CRY: FORM-GIVING

In *Night Journey* Graham went to great lengths to render visible the incest that would have taken place off stage and have been unseen in Sophocles’ play. Banes called Jocasta and Oedipus’ duet in *Night Journey* “. . . surely one of the frankest choreographic expressions of coitus in the Western canon. . . . They have no family life, no children, no relatives, . . . nor do they share a public life. All they have together is sex—on the floor, in bed, walking, and indeed, whenever and wherever they can” (160, 163). As Oedipus begins courting Jocasta, she rises while contracting and releasing her abdomen thereby sending her pelvis and torso into an erotic spasm. When she sits again, he bows his head into her lap in a gesture suggestive of oral foreplay. They separate to opposite ends of the stage, and the tension between them builds as she advances toward him again slowly along a diagonal. With each step she raises her leg and draws it across her body as if gesturing “Come hither.” He wraps her in his cloak and the consummation of their love begins. Turning, they remove the cloak together and brazenly present themselves as a couple to the audience. With their bodies open, arms raised and bent at the elbows so head and arms form the tines of human tridents, they use their calves to gently pulse up and down (*relevé* in ballet). The sex begins on the floor with Oedipus haughtily mounting Jocasta from above, then abruptly rising and lifting her with him. They spin around together with her legs lifted and splayed open to the audience. At times, the two dance intertwined on the Noguchi bed sculpture which elevates them above the chorus of dancers who later enter the stage. On the bed, Jocasta and Oedipus tie themselves to each other with a silk cord. Like an over-determined dream symbol, the cord simultaneously represents the umbilical cord and sexual union (and it will be the instrument of Jocasta’s eventual suicide). Along the floor, the chorus’s v-shape formation directs the eye to the post-coital couple standing at its apex, still bound together by the cord, as they begin to process defiantly downstage center toward the audience.

In choreographing this duet, Graham had to identify deeply with the figure of the erotic mother. In “Motherhood According to

Giovanni Bellini" (1975), Kristeva's analysis of Renaissance painter Giovanni Bellini's images of the Madonna and Child, she argues that through an incestuous identification with the erotic mother, Bellini reveals a maternal body otherwise inexpressible in our culture and leads motherhood's entry into symbolic existence by giving form to her "undiscovered *jouissance*" (243, 248-249). She uncovers a latent eroticism in Bellini's Madonnas not found in those of his Renaissance contemporaries, such as Leonardo da Vinci. This eroticism can appear through a hand gesture, as in some paintings in which the Madonna touches the exposed genitals of the Christ child (e.g., *Madonna with the Child*, 1460-64, Accademia Carrara, Bergamo); or in a gaze, particularly inward gazes that suggest the mother's psychic interiority (e.g., *Madonna with the Child*, 1460-64, Museo Correr, Venice). But most of all, the *jouissance* of maternal eroticism resonates within the form of the paintings, particularly their luminous space and color (e.g., *Madonna with Blessing Child*, 1475-80, Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice)—the same color Kristeva celebrates in the modern art of Rothko and Matisse (250). Kristeva writes, "At the intersection of sign and rhythm, or representation and light, of the symbolic and the semiotic, the artist speaks from a place where she [mother] is not, where she knows not. He delineates what, in her, is a body rejoicing [*jouissant*]" (242). This is to say, she sees Bellini's paintings bearing witness to a maternal *jouissance* that runs counter to the canonical asexual account of the Madonna they depict (a point to which I will return in the following section). When the artist identifies with and speaks for an erotic mother in this deep way, Kristeva claims: "A kind of incest is then committed . . ." (248-249). In this section I show that in her "script of movement," Graham similarly bears witness to maternal *jouissance* through the form of her medium, i.e., the moving body, specifically through her signature "contract and release" technique which I describe below.

Kristeva writes that when Bellini's work reaches the threshold of repression and maternal *jouissance*, "We no longer hear words of meanings; not even sounds . . . the voice here is silent. It bursts forth as a cry after having gone through colors and luminous spaces" (249-250). The cry which burst forth through Bellini's color and space, bursts forth in Graham's movement as she too incestuously

identifies with the erotic mother. Graham calls this bursting forth "the vaginal cry." Interpreting one moment in *Night Journey*, Graham writes:

. . . Jocasta kneels on the floor at the foot of the bed and then she rises with her leg close to her breast and to her head, and her foot way beyond her head, her body open in a deep contraction. I call this the vaginal cry; it is the cry from her vagina. It is either the cry for her lover, her husband, or the cry for her children. (Graham 214)

Significantly, as a silent cry ambiguously sounding for "lover, husband, or children," the vaginal cry shouts the *jouissance* of a lover-mother, that is, an erotic mother. The vagina, in fact, speaks at key moments throughout *Night Journey*. For example, as Banes notes, at the end the same descent and pelvic rise is repeated from the beginning of the dance: ". . . it is her death as well as her last orgasm" (163).

Movement consistently originates in the pelvis and the vagina in Graham's technique. The vagina is so central to her movement that Graham once even dismissed a particular dancer's ability by saying: "She never would have been a great dancer. She doesn't move from her vagina" (212). One of her male dancers once claimed that the Martha Graham Dance Company was the only dance company where men suffered from vagina envy (211).⁸ The dance movement generated in the vagina resonates and expands throughout the body as tensions and relaxations. The essential movement of Graham's technique consists in the "contract and release" (e.g., Jocasta's "deep contraction" in the quotation above); that is, a sudden, almost violent contraction of the pelvic muscles and abdomen accompanied by a simultaneous extension of the back, followed by a relaxation of those muscles.⁹ These "tensive, percussive, and angular motions" are "frequently executed through a contraction/beat/release pattern" (Corey 204-205), a pattern which recalls both orgasm and the rhythms of labor. Thus this technique which appears throughout her oeuvre is particularly suited to the erotic and maternal themes of *Night Journey*. In the words of dance scholar Katherine Power,

Graham's "movement lexicon, sourced as it is in the propulsive, ecstatic contraction and release of the pelvis, provided the perfect vehicle for a dance predicated on female desire" (73).

Contracting and releasing, tensing and extending, the Graham dancer's body divides in and against itself. When Jocasta's character moves this way, the technique suggests a heterogeneity or division of the body that Kristeva describes as specific to maternity. Dance historian Mark Franko describes the bodily oppositions in Graham's "contract and release" technique:

When the dancer contracts, the concavity of the spine creates the feeling in him or herself and for the observer of retreating beneath or below or into the body's surface structure; the release, on the other hand, reasserts that structure by stretching it outward into space toward its corporeal limits. (Franko 114)

As movement that constantly redefines the limits of the body by oscillating between its inside and outside and pushes the body in oppositional directions, the contract and release resonates with Kristeva's description of her own pregnant body within which she feels an opposition between the pelvis and the torso. Kristeva characterizes the pelvis as the "center of gravity, unchanging ground, solid pedestal, heaviness and weight to which the thighs adhere" in contrast to the torso, arms, neck, head, face, calves, and feet whose "unbounded liveliness, rhythm and mask . . . furiously attempt to compensate for the immutability of the central tree" ("Stabat Mater" 253-4. Kristeva goes on to explain that the maternal body divides itself during pregnancy and engages in division and discharge at birth.

This division of the body provides the foundation for language: "A mother is a continuous separation, a division of the very flesh. And consequently a division of language—and it has always been so" (254). Since the mother's body forms the substrate upon which symbolic language is built, symbolic language inherits this division in the form of differential meaning, syntactical divisions, grammatical divisions between parts of speech, etc. As a

codified technique, the contract and release operates as a symbolic modality within the language of movement; but more importantly it is simultaneously a non-verbal articulation of the maternal semiotic in language; that is to say, it is a writing with the body that bears witness to the bodily dimension of language proper.

The contract and release technique Graham developed is unique to her choreography and constitutes a revolution in the poetic language of movement, particularly in contrast to ballet against whose technique and gender roles Graham revolted.¹⁰ Through this revolt rooted in the female, and specifically maternal, body, Graham engages in what Sara Beardsworth would call the ethics of "form-giving," that is, reasserting and giving form to the lost nature of maternal subjectivity (220-221, 226). The medium of Graham's form-giving is the body itself. As former Martha Graham Dance Company dancer and biographer Agnes de Mille noted, Graham always taught that it was the body, "the torso—heart, lungs, viscera, and above all, spine—which expresses" (qtd. in Bannerman 268-267).

JOCASTA VERSUS THE VIRGIN: MATERNAL EROTICISM AND SUBJECTIVITY

Kristeva notes there is a common tendency in western society to associate sexuality with the (female) lover and desexualized object relations with the mother ("Reliance" 69). The Virgin Mary is the most venerated image of the west's desexualized maternal ideal, and as Kelly Oliver points out in her reading of Kristeva's "Stabat Mater" and *Black Sun*, traditionally the Virgin Mary has functioned as a figure sanctioned by the Symbolic with which a woman can identify after having to abandon her own mother in Oedipal separation (Oliver 52).¹¹ However, in choreographing *Night Journey* Graham chose instead to identify with the scorned figure of Jocasta. In the dance she is clearly lover *and* mother as numerous critics have noted. For example, dance scholar Marcia Siegel writes, "Oedipus and Jocasta's duet in *Night Journey* (1947) is a series of twinings and inversions in which the dancers lapse from poses of lovemaking into poses of mother and child; one moment he straddles her and the next she's rocking him in her lap" (313); Banes writes, "He picks

her up and swings her around, and then she yields, clasping him in a position that is both erotic and suggestive of childbirth" (161); and Power writes, "Graham effectively conflates the figures of mother and lover by creating a gestural text for Jocasta which merges the nurturant and the sexual in a provocative version of Mother-love clearly outside the confines of legitimized maternal affection. . . . dissolving the boundaries between maternal affection and sexual passion" (73).

Twice during the amorous duet we see echoes of the Pietà (Burt 42), that is, the rendering in Catholic art of Mother Mary holding her dead son Christ, typically in her lap, as famously sculpted by Michelangelo (*Pietà*, 1499, Basilica di San Pedro, Vatican) and painted by Giovanni Bellini (*Pietà*, 1505, Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice). In *Night Journey*, Oedipus lies across Jocasta's kneeling thigh, his arms splayed out so that he rests in an almost cruciform pose while she embraces his torso and head. As Graham later explained in her autobiography, the pose is *both* maternal and erotic for Jocasta:

. . . as her young husband, he seems to lie across her knees as though she were rocking him, and she hears in her imagination a baby cry. She does hear that cry; it enters from her soul. It is the cry of her lover as he subjects her to his wishes. It is the cry of a baby for its mother. (Graham, 215; qt. in Burt, 42-43)

Graham intertwines this Pietà on each occasion with highly erotic movements. After the first one, they lie on the floor as if expired from orgasm. After the second Pietà (which is a bit more mournful than the first), Jocasta then climbs up on Oedipus with her hands behind his neck and crosses her legs so that the weight of her body is supported by her shins pressing across his pelvis. He then pivots her on her shins, lowering her torso so she is upside down in what critics have described as a "kama sutra" pose. He hoists her back up, she drops her legs, and when she is standing again he slides down her body, lubriciously at first until she eventually holds him as if a baby. By provocatively invoking the pose of the Pietà within an erotic duet, Graham positions her Jocasta as a foil to the west's

idealized and desexualized mother of God.

Graham's conflation of Jocasta and the Virgin thus contaminates the lover/mother dichotomy. In her recent work on reliance (which in the French connotes a linking or sharing between the mother and the infant),¹² Kristeva offers an alternative to the lover/mother split which can help us to understand Graham's Jocasta as a maternal subject. Kristeva shows how the libido of woman as lover does not disappear as she transitions to maternity; rather the drive toward libidinal satisfaction that propelled the sexual act which resulted in conception is also the very source of the maternal care she provides as she reorients the libido toward the urgency of life ("Reliance" 73, 79). The mother experiences a strong intensity of the drives, both of her own and, through projective identification, those of her baby; but her inhibition of the drives allows her to transform the affect into tenderness, care taking, and benevolence (Kristeva, "Motherhood Today"). For Kristeva, conception, pregnancy, labor, and birth are all flesh and basically erotic—"erotic" meaning not just a sexual force, but a life generating force that includes sexuality (Wilson 106). Thus the mother is necessarily always already erotic for both Kristeva and Graham's Jocasta. Of course, as a mother who had sexual intercourse with her son, Jocasta is not emblematic of the maternity Kristeva espouses in her notion of reliance in which part of the sexual libido transforms into a drive oriented to caring for life. Nevertheless, Kristeva's theory of reliance helps to clarify Jocasta's problem by demonstrating what it is not. Jocasta's tragic flaw is not her inherent eroticism; rather that eroticism is necessary for maternal care itself.

So how do we understand Jocasta's tragedy within Kristeva's framework? We typically read the tragedy of the Oedipus myth as that of Oedipus' losing his identity when he discovers he was not who he thought he was. In psychoanalytic terms, despite his conscious intentions to do otherwise, he did not properly separate from his mother (as one should do during his namesake phase) in order to become his own subject. Graham does, in fact, illustrate this traditional reading of Oedipus' tragedy in *Night Journey*. While he and Jocasta are still bound together, Tiresias enters and, like the father of the Freudian or Lacanian Oedipal triangle, separates

them by symbolically cutting their cord with his phallic flexed foot and his staff. Realizing the truth of his lover's identity, Oedipus holds the severed cord and gazes at it in abject horror. He violently throws it to the ground in a futile attempt to restore his identity in opposition to the mother into whose womb he had just returned. Finally Oedipus removes the broach from his mother's costume, blinds himself with it, and gropingly exits.

However, the failure of separation was not Oedipus' problem alone. Kristeva points out that separation—first through birth and second through resolution of the Oedipal conflict—in fact, provides a way for the *mother* to assert her own subjectivity. During pregnancy, which Kristeva describes as a splitting or folding of the flesh, the subjectivity of the mother-to-be is ambiguous (“Stabat Mater” 254). The expulsion of birth represents not only the emergence of the child as a separate body and subject, but also of the mother as a separate body and subject. Speaking from the perspective of the mother giving birth, Kristeva writes, “I abject the Thing into which we were fused, the biopsychical continuum I had become” (“Reliance” 76). Kristeva then maps the movement of the drives as the mother establishes her new postnatal subjectivity. To finalize the psychization, she transforms abjects into objects of care, survival, and life: “maternal eroticism separates and rejoins [*relié*] . . . Beyond abjection and separation, tenderness is the basic affect of reliance” (75, 76). Abjection then is not simply an expulsion of that which is despised, but rather, it is a “normal” psychosexual element of maternal eroticism (76). Following this model, Jocasta's tragedy is the same as Oedipus'—it is a crisis of her own subjectivity and identity, a lack of separation and abjection, a failure to de-fuse the prenatal biopsychical continuum. In *Night Journey* we see this crisis as well. After Tiresias intervenes, Jocasta lies on the bed as if she is already a corpse. The vitality of her *jouissance* snuffed out, she suffocates under the weight of “the Thing” she failed to abject. This crisis leads to Jocasta's suicide, the ultimate destruction of her already devastated subjectivity (and an event like the incest which took place off-stage in Sophocles). Graham's Jocasta, pensive and grief-stricken, takes on an almost heroic hue as she nobly faces her guilt (Stodelle 147). With gravity she steps toward the audience,

removes her over-garment, and finally reaches down to reclaim the fallen cord and hangs herself.

“THE DAUGHTERS OF THE NIGHT”: MOTHERS, DAUGHTERS, AND RELIANCE

Söderbäck's description of Kristeva's ongoing project on maternity could equally apply to Graham's *Night Journey*: “By bringing the mother out of the shadows, she provides women with a past (a genealogy of their own, a community of women, a history hitherto repressed) and, simultaneously, with a future (in the sense of liberating them from predefined roles and positions. . .”) (Söderbäck 65). Graham brings Jocasta out of the shadows, writes and renders visible her eroticism, and by replacing Sophocles' chorus of older men with a danced chorus of seven young women called the Daughters of the Night, she provides a community of women who can identify with and share the history of the mother.¹³ If the chorus was an emotional bridge between spectators and actors in Sophocles' time (Fagles and Knox 20, Graham's chorus creates an emotional and corporeal bridge between mother and audience allowing us to see her maternal eroticism.

Graham could have simply called this ensemble of women a “chorus,” but her choice of the word “Daughters” in a dance about one of the most infamous mothers in the western canon, suggests we can read a familial relationship between Jocasta and the Daughters of the Night.¹⁴ As the “Night Journey” of the dance is Jocasta's journey, these are the daughters of her night, and as such they share an intimate relation to her psychically and physically. Reflecting on mother-daughter relationships, Kristeva writes, “Women doubtless reproduce among themselves the strange gamut of forgotten body relationships with their mothers” (“Stabat Mater” 257). Frequently in *Night Journey*, the Daughters of the Night quite literally reproduce Jocasta's movements. Banes notes that by doing so the women at times echo Jocasta's thoughts and at other times input sympathetic commentary of sorrow, regret, or solace (158). The Daughters, through Graham's dance-writing, bear witness to the semiotic mother's embodied sexuality, desire, and loss by mirroring her with their own bodies.

The Daughters first appear in the beginning of the dance right after Jocasta has been contemplating the cord and Tiresias has made his entrance. The seven women swoop across the stage, and their leader's path crosses Jocasta's suggesting a kind of symmetry between the two women. Jocasta appears anguished as she stands with one elbow of a flexed arm pointed to the sky; the leader and the rest of the chorus quickly follow suit and hold a similar pose. They continue to embody her movement again and again in the dance. In one particularly poignant moment toward the end of the dance when a distraught Jocasta has collapsed on the ground and is barely able to hold her weary body up with one bent arm, the chorus in unison again echoes her by lying prone but in a sturdier, more geometric version of their mother's pose. In both of these instances the chorus identifies with, strengthens, and in a sense idealizes the mother's poses. Furthermore, throughout the entire dance, the chorus echoes Jocasta's frequent and turbulent contract and release movements.

"The strange gamut of forgotten bodily relationships" to which Kristeva refers are the very kinesthetic relationships that structure the semiotic and are driven by maternal libido. Following the lines of Bellini's aesthetic and incestuous identification with mother, in the above section on "The Vaginal Cry," I suggested that by deeply identifying with an erotic mother "a kind of incest is then committed" by Graham (248-49). This incest is represented in turn by the Daughters' relationship to Jocasta. However, whereas Bellini's paintings of the Madonna and Christ child still enacted to some extent his unconscious *male* phantasies of the erotic mother, the exchange between the female chorus of daughters and Jocasta is a qualitatively different relationship. Thus I assert that the significance of *Night Journey* lies not only in the manifest incest of mother and son—the subject of the work's erotic duet—but also, and perhaps more importantly, in a latent incest between mother and daughter(s) inscribed in the movement of the chorus. To explicate my claim, I turn to Kristeva's *The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt* in which she describes the daughter's Oedipal phase as a two-part phase which she designates with superscripted numbers: "Oedipus¹" and "Oedipus²".

In the classical psychoanalytic account of the Oedipal phase, the son splits with the mother and identifies with the father. No longer part of a symbiotic relationship, the male subject takes on a new found sense of unity. Oedipus' problem was one of falling back into the mother, which dissolved the borders of his subjectivity. The daughter too splits with the mother in the Oedipal phase, but as Kristeva points out, since the daughter is also female she in a sense splits from herself. That is to say, for both the son and the daughter, the mother's feminine sexuality is rendered abject, but the daughter renders herself abject too insofar as she identifies her body with the mother's body (Oliver 61). The first step of the daughter's Oedipal phase, "Oedipus¹", is the masturbatory incestuous desire for the mother. In "Oedipus²", she must change objects from the mother to the father. Both the boy and girl initially have an incestuous desire for the mother, but in making the shift to "Oedipus²", Kristeva says the girl must deny a "primary homosexuality" that in turn denies her primary semiotic link to the mother (*Sense* 99, 102). Thus Kristeva points out that while boys and girls inherit the same symbolic phallus, it is not accompanied by the same sensorial experience (99).

The loss of the mother must be negated in order for the girl to traverse her trauma, that is, she must not only lose the mother but forget the loss itself. This negation of the loss of the mother signals entry into language (Oliver 62; Kristeva, *Black Sun* 43). As the girl forgets the mother's body and adopts the symbolic phallus by acquiring language proper she participates in the familial and cultural devaluation of the mother's body and by extension women, which leads to disappointment, dissociation, and melancholy (Kristeva, *Sense* 100). As Alison Stone notes in *Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and Maternal Subjectivity*, women cannot mourn their mothers because they cannot idealize them culturally; they must instead idealize the father, but they cannot become him as boys can (96).¹⁵

In her early work, Kristeva conceded that the girl must separate and forget the mother to become a subject, that the girl must in fact kill the mother in order not to kill herself (Oliver 62): "matricide is our vital necessity," she writes (Kristeva, *Black Sun* 27). However, Stone offers a way of rethinking the mother-daughter relationship

without matricide. In lieu of mourning, Stone argues the girl uses primitive unconscious identification, that is, she incorporates the maternal body into her own (Stone, *Feminism* 96). Stone explains by writing from the perspective of the infant girl:

I learn to make sense of the bodily movements that I make on the model of agency I discern in my mother. To do this, I take the person of my mother as she figures into my experience and imagination, and I transpose her person onto myself. I incorporate the figure of my mother, and map it onto my own body with its emerging boundaries—boundaries that only become consolidated insofar as I repeatedly model myself upon my mother. (Stone, *Feminism* 102)

In turn, the mother reciprocates the infant's modeling (Stone, *Feminism* 103). Paradoxically, through identifying with mother, the girl differentiates by incorporating the mother's sense of agency for herself (103-104). The Daughters of the Night incorporate and map Jocasta's body onto themselves, and by doing so emerge as strong figures with their own agency even if they cannot prevent the tragedy.¹⁶ While Stone does not ascribe the daughter's reincorporation of the maternal body to an incest phantasy, I would like to suggest that at least in *Night Journey* in which the daughters map and incorporate a specifically *erotic* maternal body "a kind of incest is then committed" (Kristeva 248-249).

I read Kristeva's newer work on maternity, particularly on *reliance*, as implicitly remedying the matricide she claimed to be "a vital necessity" in the past. Therefore, I believe we can now read Stone and Kristeva as describing a similar process but from the perspectives of the infant and the mother, respectively. Kristeva's *reliance* can provide an important theoretical supplement to Stone's work by accounting for the role of the drive in infantile incorporation and mapping,¹⁷ and Stone's model describes how the infant incorporates and maps the semiotic substrate of language. Kristeva says the mother re-learns language as her child learns by speaking the echolalia and language of the child ("Reliance" 78). In a sense, the mother incorporates and maps the infant onto her body:

... the child's language acquisition implies that the mother also re-learns language. In the projective identification of the mother and the child, the mother inhabits the mouth, lungs, and digestive tube of her baby and by accompanying his echolalia, leads him towards signs, sentences, stories: hence *infans* becomes a child, a *speaking subject*. (Kristeva, "Motherhood Today")

Because of our often Lacanian emphasis on symbolic language acquisition when describing the resolution of the Oedipal conflict, we often forget the importance of this sort of sensorial, prelinguistic, and translinguistic experience in language (Kristeva, *Sense* 99).

Stone's emphasis on incorporation and mapping and Kristeva's emphasis on the mouth and breath and lungs are mutually revealed in the relationship between the chorus and Jocasta in *Night Journey*. The chorus and Jocasta not only learn each other's movement, they inhabit the same breath. The breath's relation to the body is central to Graham's work, especially in the contract and release technique. Dance historian Henrietta Bannerman, quoting dance critic Anna Kissellgoff, highlights the importance of "the angular contractions in which breath is visibly expelled" and "the distortions those create in the body for expressive purposes" (Kissellgoff, qt. in Bannerman 272). As Jocasta and the Daughters of the Night share the same movement and same manner of breathing when they contract and release, there is a congruence between the mother's breath and body and the daughters' breath and bodies.

This more precise analysis of breath in both language acquisition and Graham technique allows us to expand our understanding of the aforementioned vaginal cry. As Graham explained in her autobiography, Jocasta's vaginal cry is a cry for "her children" (plural), not just for Oedipus. While in Sophocles, following the standard Greek myth, Jocasta had two daughters—Antigone and Ismene (who do not appear in *Oedipus Rex*)—in *Night Journey*, Graham's Jocasta has seven "daughters." Thus the vaginal cry of the mother can be read as a cry not only for Oedipus, but for the Daughters of the Night. Conversely, the cry is the first sound the

infant makes to the mother, a distress call to make up for the absence of intrauterine components after the infant has been separated from mother's body through birth (Kristeva, "Place Names" 282). As such, the cry is an important part of the semiotic foundation of language. The cry means the child must henceforth reckon with the mother's desire: "the door is finally open to a relationship with the object, at the same time as representation and language make their appearance" (282). The cry in *Night Journey*—which echoes back and forth between mother and daughters—brings us to the semiotic modality of language developed in the early relationship with the mother's body.

Both Kristeva's theory and Graham's dance offer a way to resurrect and care for the lost maternal body and lost maternal subjectivity within the Symbolic order. The Daughters of the Night demonstrate this caring for Jocasta several times. For example, in the beginning of the dance when Tiresias first exits the stage leaving Jocasta alone, she collapses on the bed. The chorus leader then reenters holding branches, ostensibly to announce Oedipus' arrival, but she shapes her body in such a way as to suggest she is not there merely to offer his official introduction, but also to provide Jocasta with tender empathy during her psychological distress. The rest of the chorus enters in a stately phalanx escorting the rather pompous new king who extends his leg with flexed foot over Jocasta, but then they break formation to surround her as if protecting her. Parallel to the process of libidinal movement in *reliance* from mother to infant, the Daughters restore rather than disavow the primary homosexuality of "Oedipus!" and use its libidinal energy for the maintenance of Jocasta's life for as long as they can. The Daughters of the Night offer an antidote to the forgetting of the loss of the mother by radically remembering and idealizing her.

CONCLUSION: DANCE AND WRITING FROM THE PLACE OF FLESH

Mitchell Wilson points out that Kristeva's theory is connected to a personal style because she is "writing theory from that place of the flesh" (103). In writing her "script of movement" for Jocasta, Graham too writes from the place of flesh and with the flesh itself.

While the dancer does not speak with language proper, she does speak with the body, and the choreographer writes with the body. In fact, it is significant that Graham writes and speaks with the body in telling the story of Jocasta in *Night Journey* precisely because it is her maternal body that has been repressed. In Sophocles' play, the incestuous events surrounding the erotic maternal body are declared to have happened, but they are not shown in the performance or described explicitly in words. In *Night Journey*, Graham locates the absence of writing in Sophocles' writing proper and intervenes by reasserting the primacy of the mother's body.

Kristeva's work demonstrates that the mother's body, though repressed, persists in the rhythm, primal syntax, feeling, and affect of language, that is to say, the mother's semiotic body is always intertwined with the symbolic in language. As Graham speaks with the body, she demonstrates Kristeva's point that the semiotic always speaks within language. By emptying the Oedipus myth of all the other elements except the incest, *Night Journey* re-scripts the preverbal and pre-Oedipal mother-infant relationship as described by Kristeva. Kristeva now characterizes this relationship in terms of maternal eroticism or *reliance*. Mother is necessarily always already erotic for both Kristeva and Graham. Therefore, when desexualized accounts of motherhood inscribed and idealized in the Symbolic deny maternal eroticism they also deny the mother of her subjectivity and agency. At stake in *Night Journey* is the possibility of giving form to lost maternal subjectivity.

Despite her tragic fate, the Jocasta of *Night Journey* still provides a powerfully defiant challenge to the Symbolic order. Kristeva argues that by identifying with the erotic mother, as she claims Bellini does and as I have argued Graham does, an artist can speak to the mother's hitherto outlaw *jouissance*—outlaw because it is outside the Law of the Father which structures the Symbolic order. We do not normally see maternal eroticism precisely because it is rendered abject and deemed obscene in the Symbolic. By telling the story of Jocasta's eroticism, which had not been previously written into the western canon, Graham intervenes in the Symbolic, revolts, and gives form to the maternal eroticism repressed throughout western culture. She undermines the dichotomous lover/mother

logic of the Symbolic ideal image of desexualized maternity and offers instead an account of an integrated lover-mother subject.

NOTES

1. Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the joint conference of the Society of Dance History Scholars + Congress on Research in Dance, University of Iowa, November 2014, and at the meeting of The Kristeva Circle, University of Memphis, September 2015.
2. *Night Journey* premiered May 3, 1947, Cambridge High School, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Choreography and costumes by Graham, set by Noguchi, music by William Schuman, and original lighting by Jean Rosenthal. Graham played the role of Jocasta.
3. My description and analysis of *Night Journey* is based on several staged versions: (1) An unpublished VHS recording in the collection of the Jerome Robbins Dance Division of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts of the Martha Graham Dance Company's April 1985 performance at New York State Theater with Janet Eibler as Jocasta; (2) an unpublished DVD recording in the Jacob's Pillow Dance Archives, Becket, Massachusetts, of the Company's August 11, 1994 performance at the Jacob's Pillow Dance festival featuring Terese Capucilli; and (3) the Company's live performance at New York City Center on April 14, 2016 featuring Blakeley White-McGuire. I wish to extend my gratitude to Norton Owen, Director of Preservation at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Archives for his assistance. There is a widely available 1957 filmed version of *Night Journey* commissioned by Graham in which director Alexander Hammid took liberties with the camera's point of view. Not only does this make it difficult to determine the dancers' facing (that is, it is hard to tell if the dancers would be facing the audience or not as the camera moves in and around them), but at times it causes the chorus to obscure Jocasta and Oedipus during their sexual union in a way that does not happen on stage. The visibility of the danced incest in the staged versions, unfortunately compromised in the film, is an important element in my argument. Hammid also emphasizes Oedipus far more than he is in the staged versions. When Oedipus dances his solo on stage, for example, Jocasta sits downstage closer to the audience than he is, and thus we interpret the scene first and foremost as one from Jocasta's memory. In the film, however, frequent close-ups of Oedipus or shots of him in isolation make it appear that the scene is about him. Victoria Thoms notes the film version has been used for major analyses, such as Ramsey Burt's and Sally Banes's both of which I cite in this article, and has become the "real" version of the dance though it is very different from the staged version (106-7). See Thoms, *Martha Graham: Gender and the Haunting of a Dance Pioneer* (Bristol, UK and Chicago: Intellect, 2003).

4. Some dance scholars have read this as a specifically feminine space. Nurit Yaari writes, "The purposeful neglect of the male public domain in favor of concentration on the female private domain enabled Graham to depict woman's inner experiences and inner struggles in dance" (227). Banes describes the work as private and erotic, unlike the public setting of Sophocles: ". . . the relationship of both Jocasta and Oedipus to public life and the state, stressed in Sophocles, almost completely disappears in *Night Journey*. This intensely private, erotic perspective modernizes and feminizes the myth just as much as does the new centrality of Jocasta's role in the tragedy" (158).
5. Graham switches the order of the suicide and blinding from how they had appeared in Sophocles text.
6. Regarding questions of sexual difference, I want to acknowledge the contested relation of Graham to feminism within the historiography of dance scholarship on Graham. Graham herself renounced feminism, like many American modern artists of her generation who denied their work was in any way political, though Victoria Thoms points out this is in contradiction with her feminist "living" and "doing" in Judith Butler's senses of those words (Thoms 32, 34). Graham was a formidable figure in the world of the arts who challenged the feminine niceties of ballet and often dealt with sexually explicit and taboo themes. Thus Thoms argues that Graham's life and work create a feminist consciousness despite her declaration to the contrary (Thoms 35). Graham's rejection of feminism reveals the complexity of negotiating gender identity under patriarchy (Thoms 35). In Thoms's compelling analysis, she neither dismisses Graham's declaration nor takes it as the final word. Feminist scholarship on *Night Journey* is divisively split. In one camp are scholars like Deborah Jowitt who see Graham's Jocasta as a victim or as too submissive to Oedipus and reduced to her sexual drives. Marianne Goldberg claims Jocasta too often dances in horizontal positions in contrast to the generally towering vertical postures held by Oedipus and Tiresias in the dance (Goldberg cited in Corey 206). Sally Banes makes similar arguments and says Jocasta acquiesces to Oedipus and seduces him by the basest means possible (Banes 160). Similarly, Marcia Siegel sees Jocasta as a weak character (Siegel cited in Burt 35). Furthermore the stereotype of woman as mother or temptress could be seen as reinforcing the post-WWII rise of the feminine mystique; the gender hierarchy and emotional extremes in *Night Journey* can be read as deeply conservative (Banes 3). In the other camp (with which I fellow-travel) are scholars such as Gay Morris who read Graham as deconstructing stereotypes and bearing witness to the psychological complexity of women and mothers living in an oppressive society. Frederick Corey reads *Night Journey* and many of Graham's dances as examples of feminist revisionism. He understands Graham as taking male authored stories and re-centering them on women to express what Nancy Miller calls "stories of the body" (Miller 355 cited in Corey

205) while often emphasizing empathy between women (Corey 204-205). This applies to many other works in Graham's so-called "Greek cycle" such as Graham's retelling of Medea in *Cave of the Heart* (1946), and *Clytemenstra* (1958). Corey asserts that giving expression to the vulnerability of women in patriarchal society does not reinforce it but rather raises critical feminist consciousness (Corey 206). Ramsey Burt says that *Night Journey* reveals the historical construction of gender subjectivity in Graham's era, but that also Jocasta's strength is revealed in psychical concepts and the work's "combination of death, eroticism, and the maternal body" (Burt 35, 37). He claims Graham depicts Jocasta as a powerful woman with desires without reducing her to a stereotypical femme fatale or a "man eating vamp" (48).

7. Sophocles remained steadfastly consistent on this point. In his later *Oedipus at Colonus*, for example, Creon says to the chorus leader, ". . . / they'd never harbor a father-killer . . . worse, / a creature so corrupt, exposed as the mate / the unholy husband of his own mother" (343, emphasis mine). See Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*, trans. Robert Fagles in *Three Theban Plays*, Penguin, 1984. 279-388. Other playwrights from antiquity shared Sophocles' view. For example, despite the fact the gods were punishing Thebes for the unsolved and unatoned murder of their king, Seneca's Creon claims ". . . for Thebes' crowning crime is—love of mother" (481). Seneca's Creon goes on to asymmetrically blame and abject the mother more than the son: "but worse the mother than the son, again pregnant in her unhallowed womb" (481). See Seneca, *Oedipus*, trans. Frank Justus Miller, in *Seneca in Ten Volumes*, Harvard University Press, vol. VIII, 1979, pp. 425-522.
8. In addition to movement, Frederick Corey has noted that the costumes too put emphasis on the genitals (215). Graham's focus on the mother's body and the vagina provides an antidote to the focus on the phallus and castration in traditional psychoanalytic readings of Oedipus. Graham in fact minimizes Oedipus' role. He is a "boy toy" in the dance, as Corey writes, a sexual object and not a developed character (209); and Katherine Power writes that Graham "all but reduces Oedipus to a one dimensional, posturing 'index' of phallic masculinity"; prominence and sophistication is given to Jocasta and to her "daughters of the night" (73).
9. The contract and release is the core movement upon which the rest of Graham's technique is built. Its foundational importance for her system is analogous to that of the *plié* in classical ballet technique.
10. While Graham's work is generally understood in this way by dance historians, Morris claims that holdover ballet elements mark Graham's choreography as more conservative than it could be (61-62).

11. Kristeva wrote "Stabat Mater" in two columns, one giving her own account of pregnancy and birth, the other analyzing the figure of the Virgin Mary in the west. Söderbäck characterizes the two parallel columns of "Stabat Mater": ". . . one depicting the lived and embodied (three-dimensional) experience of motherhood, the other unraveling and deconstructing an idealized (two-dimensional) image of Maternity . . ." (82). Similarly, Graham's *Night Journey* uses the embodied, erotic experience of Jocasta to deconstruct the idealized image of the Virgin.
12. Kristeva notes the French term '*reliance*' resonates with a number of concepts: "It therefore seems justified to me to rehabilitate this word: *reliance*, in the back-and-forth between Old French, French, and English. *Reliance*: to link, gather, join, to put together; but also to adhere, belong, depend on; and therefore to trust, to feel safe, to share your thoughts and feelings, to assemble together, and to be yourself" ("Reliance" 79). The translators Rachel Widawsky and Perry Zurn note: "Reliance is a French neologism based on Latin and Old French meaning binding or linking. Kristeva is playing on this etymology to speak of sensorial, physical, or mental links" ("Reliance" 71). We get an even fuller sense of the word by seeing how the translators worked with the various conjugations and constructions of *reliance*, e.g., *Relié*: reconnected, linked; *re-lié*: reattached; *reliant*: constructive; *relies*: reconnecting. Therefore, I will refer to *reliance* in French and italicize it in this article as to avoid limiting the meaning to that of its modern English cognate.
13. In some respects, this was, in fact, a return to the origin of the Greek chorus which began as a dance ensemble. "Chorus" comes from the Greek work for dance, as in the "chore" of "choreography." Thespis added an actor's speech to the dance and song of chorus, Aeschylus a second actor, and by Sophocles the chorus became commentator rather than active participant (Fagles and Knox 20).
14. My reading deviates from what Graham herself explicitly said about the chorus. In her autobiography, Graham describes the Daughters of the Night as furies and "memories of things we dread to remember, things we wish to forget—the terrors" (213) but does not refer to them as Jocasta's daughters. Yet her choice of the word 'daughters' and the movement and behavior of those daughters, who do not terrorize Jocasta at all, but rather respond to her, I believe support my reading.
15. While Jocasta is a hysterical and despised figure in Sophocles' texts, Oedipus is still idealized, most notably by his and Jocasta's daughters Ismene and Antigone who remain loyal to him in the later *Oedipus at Colonus*. Jocasta, by contrast, is not named in the later play, and while Oedipus refers to his wife and mother in many of his laments, the daughters, refer to their mother as *his* mother, not their own. Antigone: "On all the woe *thy* sire and *mother* brought thee;" (146, emphasis mine). See Sophocles, *Oedipus Trilogy*, trans. Francis Storr, Harvard University Press, 1912. Kindle edition 2012). However, in *Antigone* the title

character does claim her mother by acknowledging she and Polyneices share the same mother, "To leave my mother's son unburied there . . ." (194). See Sophocles, *Oedipus Trilogy* (Kindle Edition).

16. Graham biographer Ernestine Stodelle notes that in contrast to Sophocles' Theban elders "whose rambling discourses reveal lack of intimate knowledge concerning the action", the Daughters of the Night "dance in a frenzy of knowing the inevitable path of the tragic events they witness" (148).
17. In her generally positive review of Stone's *Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and Maternal Subjectivity*, Ewa Płonowska Ziarek does criticize Stone's lack of an account of the drive. See Ziarek, Rev. of *Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and Maternal Subjectivity*, Alison Stone in *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, 15 July 2012, ndpr.nd.edu/news/31926-feminism-psychoanalysis-and-maternal-subjectivity/.

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"IN MEMORY OF . . ." CITIZEN AND ITS OPPOSITE

I. THE UNITED STATES OF AMNESIA

Claudia Rankine's acclaimed *Citizen: An American Lyric* (2014)¹ captured popular media attention when a woman was seen reading the book at a Donald Trump rally in Springfield, Illinois, in November 2015.² The now iconic cover of *Citizen*, which features a dark hood against a stark white background,³ appeared amidst the crowd seated behind Trump as he delivered yet another race-inflected appeal for the Republican party nomination. Johari Osayi Idusuyi, a writer and community college student in Springfield, Illinois, was confronted by a white couple seated behind her and asked to put the book down. After a brief argument, Johari turned away and insistently resumed her reading, with a defiant head toss dubbed "the head flip heard 'round the nation."⁴ The layers of irony surrounding the Trump rally incident run deep, not the least of which is the media comparison between Johari's rebellious stand and the American Revolutionary War, associating Johari's head flip with the "shot heard round the world."⁵ A war fought to establish the rights of American citizens, predicated upon Locke's social contract theory and the "self-evident" truths of inalienable human rights, also codified the *opposite* of "citizen," which of course were the non-rights of slaves.⁶ The Civil Rights Act of 1964