Title: “Get away from her, you bitch”: Representations of maternal doubles in Aliens and The Hand That Rocks the Cradle

Abstract
Maternal doubles, such as occur in adoption, fostering, surrogacy, lesbian and blended families, are relatively common in New Zealand and yet, when the maternal is multiply invested it remains disturbing at a material level. In a culture where the hetero-normative family is the bedrock and maternal identity is intensely individualised the presence of two mothers in the same space at the same time produces dis-ease. When confronted with the ambiguity of two mothers, meaning is threatened; the symbolic fails to adequately hold. It is threatened both by the uncanny effects of doubling and because the identity being blurred is the fundamental precursor of identity that has been abjected. Although in the Freudian schema the child turns to the father for identity the mother “is still always ‘there,’ and the debate among psychoanalysts is what can be made of the ‘thereness’ that is there” (Cornell, 1999, 183/4). Understanding psychoanalysis as both foundation of the subject and as a deliberate device in film texts I discuss two films, The Hand That Rocks the Cradle and Aliens, which both feature maternal doubles. In these films the mothers are juxtaposed and anxiety is only resolved by one mother killing the other.