

to this reviewer. It was found, for example, that mothers who had control over their work schedule and autonomy in their position had children who were considered more academically competent by their kindergarten teachers. The researchers further found that “regardless of the number of hours fathers work outside the home, their psychological investment in their work may have potential benefits for their children’s development and their life as a family” (248).

I question the value of these findings for many North American families. First, these results are aligned with the social belief that a mother’s first priority is her family. Second, this “ideal” scenario only seems possible for families that are financially secure. Finally, and most importantly, these findings reinforce traditional gender roles, where the father’s main contribution is his ability to provide for the family and the mother’s is to be accessible to her children for nurturance.

Especially useful are the four recommendations presented in the “integration” section of the text. First, the researchers confirm that it is possible to identify children at risk for academic and social problems. Second, they enumerate important opportunities for preventative intervention with families around the transition to elementary school. Third, they argue that study of low-income populations is needed. Finally, they recommend increased family-based interventions. Although there is preventative support in place for families who are “high risk,” little to no research has been conducted to determine its efficacy. Moreover, these supports are not readily available to the general public. The researchers argue for the need to understand the already implemented supports so that they can be extended to all families.

This work encourages further quantitative research in the field. As a scholarly work, however, it will not appeal to practitioners or the general public.

## **Losing a Life: A Daughter’s Memoir of Caregiving**

Nancy Gerber.

Lanham, Maryland: Hamilton Books, 2005.

### **Reviewed by Gail M. Lindsay**

Nancy Gerber says *Losing a Life* is the story of her father’s stroke and the intervening six years prior to his death in 2001. I would argue that it is equally the story of a father and daughter, of a daughter’s struggle to grow up, and of one family’s experience of the American health care system. In fact, there seem to be many lives lost.

As an academic, Gerber turns her family experience into a book that

she intends as a public service. Gerber reflects on her father's unanticipated stroke, the immediate changes in all relationships within the family, and the socio-economic implications of homecare. She thinks out loud about how "we have no prayers or rituals for the death of someone who hasn't died" (3). She calls herself a dutiful daughter and documents the struggle to be a wife, parent, doctoral student, sister, daughter, and individual whose consciousness is awakened as the *paterfamilias* becomes dependent on others. The book probes two key questions: What occurs when an adult daughter's already full life must suddenly accommodate an ill father and concern for her caregiving mother? How does the daughter sustain her own life when her primary relationships, at least temporarily, are with her parents?

What stands out for this reader is how Gerber weaves her father's history as a German Jew and an American immigrant into the story of his stroke and its impact on her mother. Her father is assaulted, first by the stroke and then by the health care system. In her description of the aftermath of the stroke, Gerber embeds the story of her mother's day-to-day life. But Gerber's relationship with her mother is not developed in this book. Rather, she shows a father who is self-determined at the expense of his wife, and a daughter who is torn in two and living a paradox, a disjunction; Gerber "can't find the words to describe my feelings. Ordinary language is not sufficient" (50).

Gerber admits that she feels responsible for and compelled to care for her father, but she also acknowledges her naiveté and that she is configured as the heroine of the story she writes. Based on Ray's definition of caregiving as "an activity that involves intimacy and connection, in which care is given freely," Gerber identifies herself as a caregiver. I am unconvinced, however, that Gerber actually fits the definition. As her book shows through wrenching examples, care for her father is necessary, required, and urgent, but women are not always in a position to give it freely.

## **Giovanna's 86 Circles and Other Stories**

Paola Corso.

Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005.

### **Reviewed by Roxanne Harde**

Award-winning poet Paola Corso's first collection of short fiction offers a variety of feminine perspectives from different life stages. Set in working-class Italian neighbourhoods in the Pittsburgh area, the ten stories are narrated by a variety of women and girls who offer views of the ordinary with occasional dashes of magical realism. The volume begins and ends with narratives by