

points out that this writing often ignores the physicality of mothering. She seeks to bring this perspective into view. As a related issue, Blum also examines the role of men in breastfeeding. In the introduction, she promises an extended discussion of men's claims to female bodies and sexuality in relation to breastfeeding. In the substantive, empirical chapters, however, the focus seems to be on men's presence or absence and their level of financial, emotional, and practical support, with far less discussion of their claims to women's bodies and sexuality.

A central theme of this work is that the notion of intensive, exclusive mothering has been embedded in medical discourse, "expert advice," and that it has always been a "white status—and class—enhancing project" (9). In chapter two, Blum argues that nineteenth century maternalist reform efforts, expert advice on motherhood, and policy issues related to motherhood set the stage for contemporary social movements and the formation of La Leche League in 1965. Chapter three examines the ideology and practices of La Leche League and the middle-class, white mothers who are members of this organization. Chapters four and five address the meanings attached to breastfeeding by white, working-class and African American, working-class mothers, respectively, as well as the breastfeeding decisions and practices of these women.

I assigned this text in a women's studies course entitled "Theories and Politics of Motherhood." The students responded positively, offering only one criticism: "What about middle-class, African American women?" I echo this critique. The author's explanation for this absence is that La Leche League, where the middle-class respondents were found, is a white, middle-class organization. This explanation does little to satisfy the reader. I enjoyed this book and have recommended it to sociology and women's studies scholars and students, as well as to women's health care professionals interested in breastfeeding. I would recommend this text for courses on motherhood and for courses on qualitative methods: it is a stellar example of interdisciplinary research methods.

Waiting in the Wings: Portrait of a Queer Motherhood

Cherrie Moraga
Ithaca: Firebrand, 1997

Reviewed by Colette Morrow

Cherrie Moraga's *Waiting in the Wings: Portrait of a Queer Motherhood* is an

extended meditation on *Lesbiana* — Chicana lesbian — motherhood. It takes the form of a journal supplemented with commentaries, written retrospectively, on the original entries. The journal begins when Moraga becomes pregnant, continues with an account of her premature son's health problems, and ends when he is three years old.

Themes present in Moraga's previous works reappear and converge in this book. As in her earlier writings, Moraga explores her desire for a child, the performance and meaning of lesbian sexual and emotional intimacy, and the nature of kinship in Mexican-American cultures. In *Waiting in the Wings*, she examines these themes from the new perspective of *Lesbiana* motherhood. Characteristically, Moraga infuses the book with mysticism and Chicana nationalism, brought into focus here through the figure of her son, Rafael.

The prologue opens by proclaiming the biological impossibility of same-sex reproduction: "Our blood doesn't mix with . . . with an equal split of DNA" (15). Moraga subsequently questions why lesbians and gays — who lack the ability to reproduce with each other — wish to incorporate children in their families. Her answers range from personal to socio-cultural explanations. Most compelling is her suggestion that woman-centered *lesbiana familia* is a revision of "something Mexican and familial . . . without all the cultural constraints." Generative, *lesbiana familia* offers authenticity and healing in a world fraught with racism, sexism, homophobia, and abuse. It is an antidote to the death of the human spirit caused by oppression.

Although Moraga's ideology of *lesbiana familia* is specifically lesbian and Chicana, the pathos of her self-portrait will evoke empathy. Passages chronicling Rafael's premature birth and his health crises in the intensive care nursery are particularly moving. By juxtaposing heart-wrenching descriptions of Rafael's medical procedures with brutally honest self-examination, Moraga vividly reconstructs and shares her anger, fear, and guilt. Many readers also will empathize with Moraga's exhaustion as she attempts to balance parental and other responsibilities and reveals the toll this takes on her relationship with her partner, Ella.

Although much of *Waiting in the Wings* concerns common parental experiences, it remains a story about a *Lesbiana* mother and her child. Readers frequently are reminded that lesbian mothers continue to encounter personal and institutional homophobia. Readers also are introduced to the emotional complications surrounding insemination.

The book expresses Chicana literature's traditional concerns and themes. The role that spirituality and religion — Mexican Catholicism and indigenous beliefs — play in subject constitution and cultural formation are reworked through Moraga's need for faith in crisis and as she contemplates the "*mexicanismo*" that Rafael inherits. Finally, the Chicana assertion that *familia* is at once empowering and oppressive is reflected in Moraga's claim that there is a symbiotic connection between Rafael's birth and the deaths of two relatives. The final lines of the book brilliantly capture this sentiment: "Rafael . . . is a

messenger of death, not in the negative sense of the word, but in that he brings the news of the cruel and sudden miracle of the cycle of our lives" (127).

Waiting in the Wings is superbly written, a work that maintains and develops Chicana literary conventions in unexpected and thrilling ways that can be appreciated by a general audience.

My Lesbian Husband: Landscapes of a Marriage

Barrie Jean Borich
St Paul: Graywolf Press, 1999

Reviewed by Elisabeth Speller

My Lesbian Husband is part memoir, part cultural exploration, and part love story, conceived as creative non-fiction. Here, Barrie Jean Borich explores the ways that words and actions inform and reform one another. She poses the question "Are we married?"—"we" being herself (a recovered alcoholic femme lesbian) and her butch lover of twelve years, the eponymous husband, Linnea. These two women are firmly set in the various milieux of their lives: their neighbourhood, their different families, and their various friends, both heterosexual and gay-lesbian-transgender-queer.

Throughout the book, it is as if we are eavesdropping on the innermost thoughts of the author as she examines the cultural institution of marriage. In attempting to define what it is that holds her own relationship together, she explores myriad other relationships: mothers and their offspring (as children and adults), brothers and sisters, straight marriages, lesbian and gay male relationships, and friendships. She draws on her own experiences as daughter, sister, sister-in-law, niece, aunt, lover, and friend, as well as her observations of family members. By foregrounding cultural identity – Eastern European and Japanese in her own case, Italian in Linnea's, and the many and varied identities throughout her neighbourhood – issues of race, ethnicity, and multiculturalism are raised.

In addition, Borich provides a plotted and eminently readable account of the many nuances of lesbian politics in the United States during the second half of the twentieth century. She illuminates such aspects of lesbian culture as butch/femme, feminist politics, race, class, sexuality, alcohol and drug use, and non-monogamy.

The book is full of contradictions and ambivalence, however. The reader