

Caplan writes social construction theory for a mass audience. Thus, blame is placed on society—which disadvantages women—not on mothers themselves. Caplan's point is that understanding the root of negative feelings helps us make positive changes in our relationships with our mothers, with our daughters, and with other people, especially since mother-daughter relations are felt to impact on all other relationships. She emphasizes "building bridges," "repairing the rift," and the value of communication. This self-help book argues for one important and laudable strategy: that women strive to humanize their mothers, since a mother is also a person, a woman in her own right.

## **Dutiful Daughters: Caring for Our Parents as They Grow Old**

Jean Gould, ed.  
Seal Press, 1999

### **Reviewed by Christine Peets**

I had expected *Dutiful Daughters* to be a "how-to" book on caring for parents. What I found instead was a compelling collection of 22 essays not so much on the "mechanics" of caring for parents- arranging home care, nursing home care, and looking after finances- but the emotional rollercoaster of "doing it all."

In her introduction to the collection, editor Jean Gould shares her own experiences of caring for her own mother, first visiting a retirement home and then in her mother's apartment. For Gould, the world of eldercare is akin to travelling in a foreign country, without benefit of the knowledge of either custom or language. Although she writes about the United States, the experiences she described could be universal. As we age ourselves, we realize that our parents may reach the point of no longer being able to care for themselves. But they are the adults, and we are the children; therein lies the problem of giving care without taking over.

The essays explore many emotions, including those we do not always allow ourselves to express or, in some cases, even acknowledge. Mixed with one's love and respect for a parent is a melange of emotions: pride, remorse, guilt, anger, and anxiety. Strengths and weaknesses are discovered in both parents and children. Readers will feel empathy for, and perhaps identity with the writers in the volume, many of whom simply tell without telling us how they feel.

All of the essays are written by women; although, as Gould points out, this does not mean that sons do not care for aging parents. It is unfortunate that she

did not seek out essays by men. It would be interesting to learn if the emotional responses and experiences of men are similar to those of women who care for aging parents. That criticism aside, the collection shows the strengths and vulnerabilities of a diverse group of women who share their stories and describe the energy required to be in two lives, their own and their parents.

Reading these stories gives us permission to think what otherwise might have been unthinkable: that to truly be “dutiful” to our parents, we first have to be true to ourselves. This book should be read by daughters entering the foreign land of elder care, and by their brothers, husbands, and sons so we all can learn to care for our parents, in a way that maintains the dignity of everyone involved.

### **And the Skylark Sings With Me: Adventures in Home-Schooling and Community-Based Education**

David H. Albert  
Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 1999

#### **Reviewed by Andrea Toepell**

David Albert is a supporter of public education. But, as much as he likes the idea of universal education, he sought to educate his own two children to the best of his ability. He did not send them to public school. Instead, he created a home- and community-based educational environment for them. And, some ten years later, he is proud to show off the results. His daughters achieved enviable levels of mastery in many areas, especially music and science.

Albert is careful to demonstrate that his family is not genetically “loaded” with musical talent. He reasons that success is possible when children are allowed to blossom on their own terms, in their own time, in a culturally rich environment. Albert argues that most, if not all, children can attain high levels of achievement, given an appropriate level of support and guidance. Albert suggests that the public educational system cannot possibly provide the environment necessary for outstanding success. (The book refers to the American educational system, but it is likely applicable to the Canadian educational system as well.)

In order to provide the optimal developmental milieu for their children, the author and his wife made significant changes to their lives. They both left their careers and found employment that enabled them to devote their time and energy to raising and educating their children. It appears from the book that these new forms of employment were less rewarding—intellectually and