

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

financially—than their previous endeavours.

Albert's educational philosophy is based on ideas developed initially by Jean Jacques Rousseau and imported into North American educational thinking by John Dewey. Rousseau argued that, given a proper environment, the "noble savage" in a child will blossom into a successful and accomplished person. He felt that formal schooling is detrimental to the blossoming process, and that one learns better by "doing" rather than studying. Apparently, Rousseau's concern for the welfare of children was more theoretical than practical: he abandoned all five of his own children to orphanages. Albert takes the opposite approach by sacrificing his entrepreneurial career for the sake of his children's development.

The book is well written and a pleasure to read. It includes a rich bibliography, complete with the author's annotations on many of the sources. Its language is sophisticated, clear, and succinct. For the reader who agrees with Albert and Rousseau's thinking, this book will prove satisfying. For the opponent, there is much "meat" in which to sink one's intellectual teeth.

Transformative Motherhood: On Giving and Getting in a Consumer Culture

Linda L. Layne, ed.
New York: New York University Press, 1999

Reviewed by Jeanne-Marie Zeck

Transformative Motherhood, a collection of anthropological essays, is a valuable book for parents and educators. Linda Layne and her contributors present research on mothers and children who have been marginalized in American culture and, until recently, neglected by anthropologists. In this collection, the authors examine the experiences of adoptive mothers, birth mothers, and their children; surrogate mothers; foster mothers; and mothers of physically and mentally handicapped children. Layne herself presents research on women who have lost children through miscarriage, stillbirth, and death in infancy. What unites these essays is an examination of the rhetoric of gift giving and receiving. Each author analyzes how those in her particular research group use gift terminology to explain their experiences, to define themselves, and to grant full humanity to children who often are dismissed by a culture that focuses on physical "perfection."

Adrienne Rich's 1976 history of childbirth in America, *Of Woman Born*, was the first academic study to include a mother's personal account of care giving. In the tradition created by Rich, the anthropologists in Layne's book seamlessly incorporate their own experiences of mothering into their research.