

adoption papers remain sealed by the state. Her life circumstances and scientific training provide Steingraber with a unique vantage point for analysis, one that melds inner and outer worlds.

Steingraber melds inner/outer divisions most poignantly when she describes the porous placenta that connects the fetus to the outside world. As Steingraber explains, toxic chemicals that pass “into the mother’s body pass also through the placenta” (35). Thus, toxic chemicals such as pesticides permeate the placenta and fetal environment and often strengthen to more concentrated forms. Similar synthetic analysis characterizes part two, which concerns breast development and milk production. Following birth, the breast milk “takes over” (234) for the placenta, providing nourishment and strengthening an infant’s immune system. Yet, this life-sustaining substance also carries the toxic chemicals women absorb throughout their lifetimes; hence, dioxin-tainted eggs, gasoline vapors, and DDT-treated fruit all flow through mothers’ milk.

Steingraber’s analysis inspires imagination and fuels faith: “*May the world’s feast be made safe for women and children. May mothers’ milk run clean again. May denial give way to courageous action. May I always have faith*” (283). *Having Faith* is an important contribution to the study of ecology, globalization, motherhood, and environmental literature. It also is a moving memoir. Readers concerned about pollution and pregnancy will be inspired by Steingraber’s faith.

## **Finding Strength: A Mother and Daughter’s Story of Childhood Cancer**

Juanne Nancarrow Clarke with Lauren Nancarrow Clarke  
Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1999

### **Reviewed by Helene A. Cummins**

Few books have been written on the subject of the sick daughter who is cared for by her mother. In *Finding Strength: A Mother and Daughter’s Story of Childhood Cancer*, Juanne Nancarrow Clarke describes a painful journey of three years when her daughter Lauren Nancarrow Clarke was suffering with acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL). As a sociologist, Nancarrow Clarke takes the reader through the challenges a mother faces as she watches her daughter move through illness. She describes sharing the news of illness with family and friends; starting the treatment cycle of radiation and chemotherapy; assessing medication information; receiving poor medical treatment; and enduring

severe cutbacks in the medical system. She notes that mother and daughter used a convenient, local outpatient clinic and eventually returned to a more normal life. Nancarrow Clarke describes national and international cancer charities and she documents the meaning of her daughter's life with cancer.

*Finding Strength* meshes current research and literature reviews. Nancarrow Clarke cites current statistics on cancer and hospital bed accessibility. She includes an appendix of resources on childhood cancer that includes books, web sites, leisure activities, sponsorships, and advocacy resources available in North America and other continents.

Daughter Lauren weaves her own story alongside that of her mother. In footnotes, Lauren renders her experience as a teenager living with cancer. She describes the teen cancer magazine that she initiated and writes a personal reflection that forms an epilogue to the book. That Lauren survived is testament to her faith and the nurturing she received from family and friends.

This book asks hard questions about medical treatment: it highlights issues such as patient care; access to information; health care alternatives; medial and hospital bureaucracy. *Finding Strength* will be accessible to lay readers and students of sociology, psychology, and medicine. A must-read for families, it will impart hope.

## **Motherloss**

Lynn Davidman  
Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000

### **Reviewed by Gill Rye**

Personal experience led to the writing of *Motherloss*. The early death of Lynn Davidman's mother resonates throughout her analysis of interviews with 60 men and women who, between the ages of 10 and 15, experienced the premature loss of their mothers. As one would expect, this study attests to the trauma of motherloss. It examines "biographical disruption" (Davidman's term) in children and young people, which occurs when a family is suddenly and irrevocably altered by the death of a mother, and it confirms the ongoing impact into adulthood of the early loss of a mother.

Davidman's interviewees range from 20 to 70 years of age and are drawn from a variety of social and ethnic backgrounds, although the majority are classified as North American white middle class. Her study identifies commonalities and differences in the experience of early motherloss. One common result is that early motherloss creates "lasting barriers to intimacy" (108). Many of Davidman's respondents, for example, are unable to trust other people. Most poignant is Davidman's observation that siblings cannot offer