

One universal trend is the undermining of traditional, multigenerational family structures by urbanization, economic shifts, and emigration. A second positive trend is an increased regard for individual rights and democratic values. In all interviewed families, elders tell of the profound changes they have witnessed during their lifetimes and of their accompanying fears and hopes.

At the same time, the subsequent generations are aware of what they have lost and gained. One important improvement named by women and men (especially younger men) alike is the increasing equality of women and men within and outside the family. At the same time, more than one fourth of households worldwide are headed by women (in some nations 30 to 40 percent)—due to the emigration of men in search of work, divorce, widowhood, or abandonment.

Other universal problems that will be faced in the future include the loss of natural resources, physical and mental health concerns, especially alcohol and substance abuse, women's reproductive health and sex education, domestic violence, and HIV/AIDS.

While showing that traditional family structures are dissolving, Huston also demonstrates that such a constricted concept of the family is no longer adequate. Instead, she shows that families come in all shapes and sizes and she broadens the concept of family to include non-biological relations (such as street children protecting each other or groups of prostitutes living together and caring for one another's children). In creating new structures of support, these non-traditional families are adapting to the challenges of the modern world.

At the same time, conservative notion of the "traditional" family is still being forced upon individuals in all parts of the world. As Huston emphasizes, this is the wrong approach: if our main concern is children's well-being, we need to support these newly evolving types of families. Children will be protected best by adults who love and care for them, regardless of their marital status, gender, sexual orientation, or biological relationship.

Although I would have liked her to include a European country—Europe is not exempt from the difficulties faced by the rest of the world—Huston's book elucidates the urgent need for reform and her demands are universal.

***Two for the Summit:  
My Daughter, the Mountains, and Me.***

Norman, Geoffrey.  
Toronto: Penguin, 2000.

**Reviewed by Sylvia Moore**

"I had followed my daughter to the top, which was not the way I had expected

it to be or the way that it had always been. But I surely wouldn't have made it any other way. Or had it any other way, either."

Geoffrey Norman takes the reader on a spiritual and physical struggle up Aconcagua, one of the highest mountain peaks in the world. He describes the events leading up to this mid-life adventure (he has just turned 50), takes us back over a series of glimpses of his life as a father, and then carries us up the mountain as if we are watching through a camera mounted on his shoulder. His daughter walks alongside him, rising to the challenge of the climb while Norman struggles, realizing at some point that he, in fact, may not make the summit. His daughter may succeed where he might fail, and at that moment she is no longer his little girl. The child becomes the leader, challenging the parent to succeed.

The mountain is a metaphor for parenting – a laborious and joyous experience that changes over time. When he realizes that he may not make the summit, Norman decides to talk to his daughter: "The kind of talk that you have a lot, but never get used to having, I suppose, when you are a dad. The kind where you say things that have to be said but that you wish you didn't have to talk about. I decided, as I had many times, to put the talk off as long as possible."

I waited for Norman to share his thoughts on parenting and middle age. In fact, he put off the talk, both with his daughter and with the reader. I waited to read about his deep feelings for his daughter but he never articulated them. Nonetheless, I believe Norman descended the mountain a changed man, changed in spirit and in his connection to his daughter. I wanted Norman to describe these changes. Unfortunately, it is as if Norman's whole story has not been told.

### ***The Big Rumpus: A Mother's Tale from the Trenches***

Halliday, Ayun.  
Seattle: Seal Press, 2002.

#### **Reviewed by Patricia R. Payette**

Ayun Halliday has been called a new generation's urban Erma Bombeck. Writing from her family's tiny Brooklyn apartment, Halliday demonstrates a Bombeckesque dry humour for reporting the absurd and hilarious everyday details of raising children. *The Big Rumpus* grew out of Halliday's pen-and-ink photocopied 'zine called the *East Village Inky* that she describes as "an anticorporate, consciousness-raising, feminist call to arms," actually a cleverly disguised collection of amusing rants, raves, and lovingly-drawn cartoons about the minute details of her family life and their colourful adventures in the East Village.