

Inky is the nickname of Halliday's four-year-old daughter India, a sylph-like creature whose love of being unclothed makes her appear destined to take after her mother, a former performance artist. With impish Inky and her baby boy Milo, Halliday struggles in the motherhood trenches, determined to be true to herself while she raises kids in the "culinary and cultural diaspora" of New York, a city that she embraces as the anthesis of the soul-deadening suburbs of her Midwestern childhood. Halliday is a stay-at-home mom while her husband temps at Citibank, and she finds the only way to fight off the "isolation and despair" of her radical new lifestyle is to create a 'zine that gives full expression to her mothering self and her artist self. *The Big Rumpus* gives her room to elaborate on the topics covered in her 'zine – taking a stand in the working mothers versus stay-at-home mothers debate (she concludes that we each must do what works for us), reliving the adventures of breastfeeding Inky into late toddlerhood, discussing how she fights the commercialization of the holidays, and why she convinced her husband not to have their son circumcised.

Throughout *The Big Rumpus*, Halliday is insightful, funny, and candid about what she perceives as her strengths (she dresses Milo in Inky's hand-me-downs despite the disapproval of other playground mothers) and foibles as a parent (Inky swears like a sailor). I felt my own feelings about the challenges of motherhood validated when Halliday confesses, "the baby had me in such a choke hold that I felt nostalgic for the days when mopping the floor didn't require hours of strategic preparation." What Halliday expertly avoids is sweet sentimentality and the cliches that abound in other tales about becoming a mother. Even her soul-baring report of Inky's first two weeks spent in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and her love letter to Milo at the book's conclusion crackle with her quick wit. "Nobody wants to read about a perfect mother," writes Halliday, and so *The Big Rumpus*, like the *East Village Inky* before it, is a highly readable account of an imperfectly real mother.

### ***The Politics of Fertility Control***

McFarlane, Deborah R., and Kenneth J. Meier.  
New York: Chatham House Publishers.

#### **Reviewed by Sandra Jarvie**

In *The Politics of Fertility Control*, McFarlane and Meier examine what "looms behind abortion policies" and review the politics of fertility control in the United States over the past thirty years. Convinced that nearly all induced abortions are preventable by effective contraception, McFarlane and Meier suggest "that abortion politics are part of a larger political struggle about values" which they term "morality politics."

This book provides an historical perspective on the use, control, and social importance of contraception and abortion. It covers the 1960s through to the 1990s and considers the politics and policies concerned with family planning and abortion and their implications for women. The authors point out that sexuality is framed by “strong moral overtones in American society.” They contrast “ideal” sexual behaviour with the “real” sexual behaviour of most adolescent and adult Americans, a contrast that has serious implications for fertility control policies. McFarlane and Meier argue that American public policies reflect the extreme moralistic beliefs of people but not their actual behaviour.

Interestingly, McFarlane and Meier found that abstinence is ineffective as a long-term method of contraception; instead, the promotion of contraceptive knowledge, contraceptive development, and contraceptive services is far more efficacious for women. Their findings are supported by research that has “concluded that about 80 percent of the decline in overall pregnancy rates was due to improved contraceptive use.”

### ***Expecting Trouble: What Expectant Parents Should Know about Prenatal Care in America***

Strong, Thomas H., Jr.  
New York: New York University Press, 2000

#### **Review by Maria Mikolchak**

Three years ago, pregnant with my fourth child, in perfect touch with my own body, and fully convinced that, at least in my case, the main outcome of prenatal care would be a waste of time for me and profit for the obstetrician, I had my first prenatal visit after 32 weeks of pregnancy—in time to discuss practical matters of where to give birth.

Thomas Strong’s *Expecting Trouble: What Expectant Parents Should Know about Prenatal Care in America* fully supports my attitude toward prenatal care that, at the time, many considered negligent of my own health and potentially harmful to my unborn baby. Strong’s book calls into question the prevailing (and unconfirmed) assumption that prenatal care is a form of preventive medicine that can reduce the number of premature births and/or infant deaths in the United States. The author shows that in Europe, where the average number of prenatal visits is less than in the States, the mortality rate is significantly lower. In fact, the United States is ranked 23 among industrialized nations for its mortality rate. Strong suggests that it is the quality—not quantity—of prenatal care that is important.