

According to Nemzoff, parents need to reconcile their fantasies with the reality of their adult children and unearth a new vocabulary for the childhood descriptors “parent” and “child.” As she wryly notes, today “Grandmothers wear jeans and elementary-school children wear high heels.”

How, then, should parents build solid relationships with their adult children? How can they nurture open discussion of such potentially contentious issues as finance, career, relationships, marriage, grandchildren, religion, and ethnicity? Nemzoff offers the example of Maggie and Morgan who endured decades of Morgan’s mother’s vocal disapproval. Their love endured through separation, eventual marriage, and three children. Due to the judgmental attitude of her mother-in-law, however, Maggie’s mother is the preferred grandmother by her children while Morgan’s mother is repaid for her lack of tact and insight with the absence of their affection.

As Nemzoff warns, disapproval—when directly expressed—will alienate the adult child. She counsels parents to voice their concern in a gracious, tactful, and understated way that shows support for their adult children. Nemzoff’s many years as a relationship coach provide appropriate examples for readers to follow. Each chapter concludes with questions to guide our thinking about lifelong parenting and to help readers gain insight into themselves, their children, and their society.

Mother Matters: Motherhood as Discourse and Practice

Andrea O’Reilly, ed.

Toronto: Association for Research on Mothering, 2004.

Reviewed by Jennifer Hauver James

*... I have been invisible,
weird and supernatural.
I want my black dress.
I want my hair
curling wild around me.
I want my broomstick
from the closet where I hid it.
Tonight I meet my sisters
in the graveyard.
Around midnight
if you stop at a red light
in the wet city traffic,*

*watch for us against the moon.
We are screaming,
we are flying,
laughing, and won't stop.*

—excerpt from Jean Tepperman's "Witch"

Drawn from a collection of women's poetry from around the world and throughout time, Tepperman's poem echoes a common refrain: "We are here," she cries, "And we will no longer be mocked, hidden, and hushed." When reading *Mother Matters*, edited by Andrea O'Reilly, this same refrain sings loudly from page to page. Not unlike Tepperman's work from decades ago, or the words of Sojourner Truth in 1852, who asked, "Ain't I a woman?" the women in this book demand visibility—for the multiplicity of ways womanhood and motherhood are constructed, understood, and enacted. O'Reilly describes *Mother Matters* as "an archeology of maternity: playing upon the double entendre of the word Matter(s) the book seeks to examine the substance and significance of motherhood." Later she adds, "as it is represented and lived."

The eighteen essays in *Mother Matters* were chosen from over 150 articles published in the first ten issues of the *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering*. In part one of the book—Discourse—the authors unveil many of the ways motherhood and mothering are discursively constructed in various social texts. Analyses of children's literature, photography, film, and magazines reveal the complex ways that discourse serves to essentialize understandings of motherhood, legitimizing some experiences while rendering others invisible. Qualifiers such as "natural" and "full-time" are examined and revealed as powerful myths that can serve to regulate our action and sense of self. The necessity of descriptors such as "step" or "adoptive" is questioned in so far as they contribute to the othering of mothers who do not fit mythological ideals.

In part two—Practice—the authors contribute narratives and testimonies to the limitations imposed by normative, discursive constructions. Each piece offers a new perspective on how motherhood is enacted—collectively talking back to normative ideology by shining light on traditionally "othered," "invisible," or otherwise marginalized ways of mothering. The voices and experiences of lesbian mothers, grandmothers, step mothers, young single mothers, and academic mothers push us to reconsider the boundaries of traditional meanings. Together, they name themselves, reclaiming our collected matrilineal history, and honouring the lived experience of all mothers in our midst.

The power of this collection lies in its ability to challenge and resist essentialized and dichotomous ways of thinking about mothering and motherhood. In each essay, readers are invited into the gray area that is lived experience—to embrace female sexuality, express emotion, connect with the past—to refuse false titles and representations of female experience. My own reading left me feeling anger at the injustices I have encountered, resentful of the ways in which my experience has been mis- or un-represented in dominant narratives,

proud of the eloquent yet powerful ways my sisters have spoken, humbled by their experience, and inspired by their passion. Most of all, though, it left me with hope—hope that this book and the journal from which it was drawn will continue to be a place where mothers' many voices can be heard, their lives and experiences known—a place where writers can continue to “destabilize, dismantle, and deconstruct the normative discourse of motherhood that both denies the complexity of mothering and demonizes its diversity” (25), where, as Tepperman writes in her poem, “We are screaming, / we are flying, / laughing, and won't stop.”

Another Morning: Voices of Truth and Hope from Mothers with Cancer

Linda Blachman.
Emeryville, CA: Seal Press, 2006.

Reviewed by Kimberly Bonia

Linda Blachman writes of a mother's worst nightmare—living with cancer while raising a child. This inspirational, emotionally charged, witty, and heart-wrenching book is based on Blachman's 70 interviews with mothers living with cancer. While recovering from a back injury, Blachman formed a group of remarkable women, Mother's Living Stories, whose aim was not only to support each other through a diagnosis of cancer while raising their children, but to also leave a message for their children (www.motherslivingstories.org). This book fills a gap in the literature around the darker side of mothering—how mothers construct their worlds when facing the possibility of death and how they reconstruct the hopes and dreams of their children.

In each chapter, Blachman describes a mother's story of her wishes, fears, and understanding of her illness and its impact on her family life. Blachman uses narrative not only as a way of telling a story, but also as a way of changing the way we think about and understand ourselves. She refers to such narratives as “teaching stories.” Blachman successfully attempts to preserve the voices of the women she writes about. She writes in the first person so as to maintain the truthfulness and meaning of each of the mother's stories. Throughout the book, Blachman's reactions and interpretations are printed in italics, so as to easily identify her own reflections and thoughts on the stories shared. In Blachman's words, “The willingness to face what another's story elicits in us, including the fear and pain, is a key requirement of being a good listener” (9).

Intended for mothers who are living with cancer or are living through a difficult time, this book may be a source of comfort and inspiration for those experiencing the unpredictability of serious illness, coping with the possibility of death, and hoping to leave a legacy for their children.