

lesbian, black, Native American, and disabled mothers. Grouped with sections titled "Fathering," "Kin Networks," and "Marriage and Divorce," under the larger rubric of "Webs of Family Relationships," this section situates motherhood in a larger context than the dual-parent, nuclear-family norm.

It is useful to consider the appropriateness of an anthology for a feminist project such as Hansen and Garey's. If feminism is a collective movement, then the inclusion of many different voices is an apt expression of that movement. Each essay is one voice in a larger narrative and contributes to the text of feminism itself. One might also consider the sorts of biases or assumptions that shape the compilation and organization of this anthology. The "Guide to Topics," for instance, makes clear that the editors do not distinguish between gender and biological sex, despite their attempt to broaden the possibilities for family and positions within the family. Such a distinction would allow us to pose questions like "Can men mother?" or "How does a single mother fill the shoes of an absent father?" In addition, it is revealing that the "Guide to Topics" includes the category "Men and Masculinity" but not "Women and Femininity" or another female counterpart. Perhaps this is no oversight on the editors' part, but a sign of our own times and our cultural anxiety about the role of men in the family.

The editors end their introduction with an acknowledgement of a popular misconception: that feminism and family are incompatible. It is their hope, and my belief, that this anthology counters that misconception. This collection contributes to a larger feminist project which demonstrates that, in Hansen and Garey's words, "Feminists care passionately about families" (xx).

Death and the Mother from Dickens to Freud: Victorian Fiction and the Anxiety of Origins.

Carolyn Dever.
New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998

Reviewed by Monika Elbert

Carolyn Dever's book is a well-researched and excellent study about the actual medical and the idealized literary versions of mothers dying in childbirth in Victorian England. Dever claims that there are parallels between the construction of family origins in mid-Victorian novels and Freud's psychoanalytic paradigm of family and gender. They depend upon the same principle: the death of the mother, the absence of the mother, or the inefficacy of the living mother. In the Victorian and Freudian narrative, there is a longing for an

idealized mother, but when that mother becomes too real through an actual encounter, there is a deep sense of maternal loss. Thus, the missing, spectral, or dead mother who can be embodied and embraced in one's imagination is preferable to the all too real mother, who evokes anxieties in the child about his/her own personal history or genealogy. Indeed, in the imagination of the Victorians, "the only good mother is a dead mother" (19).

Dever traces the formulation of the melancholic narrative of the absent mother back to eighteenth-century developments in the novel, the Gothic and the "Bildungsroman," which both necessitate the character's separation from the mother as a move towards adulthood. According to Dever, there are three types of melancholic novels: the sentimental novel, which employs maternal absence to create an idealized picture of the family; the erotic novel, which uses maternal absence to illuminate the conflict of the adolescent sexual coming-of-age; and the emancipatory novel, in which maternal absence implies potential freedom for the motherless child in choosing her life direction outside of conventional marriage.

Dever very effectively applies her paradigm of the melancholic maternal narrative to three representative mid-Victorian novels: Dickens's *Bleak House*, Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*, and George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*. Indeed, there are other novels (by these authors and others) that fit and which she mentions in passing. I was a bit disappointed that she did not show the implications of maternal absence in the late-Victorian novel, as in Hardy, where Darwinian notions of motherhood complicate the picture and which strip the ideal, the psychological, with a more biological picture of motherhood. Her book ends with two short chapters—an excellent psychological reading of Darwin's relationship with his mother, a chapter which could have been applied more carefully to the entire study, and a less effective and very short chapter on Virginia Woolf, which seems to have been added as an after-thought. Finally, though Dever broaches the subject of missing, absent, or effete fathers in Victorian novels (and there are countless numbers, especially in Dickens), she seems to privilege the space of the missing mother.

To Dever's credit, she has a long introductory section focusing on psychoanalytic critics who examine the child's relationship with the absent or phallic mother. Leading off with Freud, Dever then explores challenges and modifications to Freudian theory with Melanie Klein's and D.W. Winnicott's notion of maternal subjectivity and objectivity, and the child's ambivalent desire for the all-powerful mother and fear of abandonment. While Dever appropriately uses Kristeva's notion of the semiotic maternal, she might also have used Kristeva's notion of the maternal melancholic to strengthen her case. The most unsettling feature of Dever's study is her suggestion that Freud's concept of maternal loss grew out of the paradigm which informed mid-Victorian novels. It might have been more culturally or historically accurate to examine some of the Germanic novels (perhaps even fairy tales) which Freud would have known or read instead of placing him exclusively

within an English literary context.

I was most stunned and awed by the epigraphs which are interspersed between chapters. Here Dever shows her meticulous research into the actual causes of maternal death or madness in Victorian England, and her poignant epigraphs, taken from contemporary medical records, manuals, and journals, show just how far removed the picture of the fictional idealized dead mother was from that of the real dying or diseased mother. But these corpses remind us, as Dever's study suggests, that the Victorian novels are really not "concerned with the woman behind the mother they mourn" (35).

A Tradition That Has No Name: Nurturing the Development of People, Families and Communities.

Mary Field Belenky, Lynne A. Bond and Jacqueline Weinstock.
New York: Basic Books, 1997.

Reviewed by Anna Mae Duane

As the title suggests, *A Tradition that Has No Name* deals with a maternal mode of experience largely unarticulated in established scholarly discourses. The authors argue that nurturing feminist leadership has been practiced for centuries, but the tradition's alternative methods and largely invisible clientele have kept it from getting the recognition it deserves. Through the description of their own work and that of various feminist organizations, the authors hope to elucidate this nameless tradition, and expand its capacity to empower the lives of marginalized and silenced people. Building on the insights gained from Mary Belenky's 1986 *Women's Ways of Knowing* in conjunction with the epistemological theories of Carol Gilligan, Paulo Freire, and Theodor Adorno, the authors delineate a comprehensive leadership model for families, communities and organizations. This alternative model privileges inclusion, discussion and empathy rather than the hierarchy, argument and competition that pervade mainstream thought.

The book's first section describes the Listening Partners project, a public service program the authors created to bring impoverished and undereducated women "into voice" through verbal and written dialogue. The authors describe individual cases (such as a rape victim who moves beyond shame and silence to finally confront her rapist) and—in so doing provide an overview of the project itself to present a pedagogical model with striking interdisciplinary potential. The study represents a particularly significant contribution to the fields of social