

Daughters of Empire: A Memoir of a Year in Britain and Beyond

Jane Sutterfield.
Toronto: Demeter Press, 2009.

Reviewed by Tatjana Takševa

This slight volume is a memoir of Jane Sutterfield's first return trip in over a decade to England. Sutterfield is a dual British-American national. In a narrative that moves back and forth across the year she spent in England, the more distant past of the writer's childhood and youth, and the present, *Daughters of Empire* chronicles a failed marriage, struggles with anorexia, and the experience of pregnancy and imminent motherhood in the wake of Sutterfield's growing self awareness and emerging identity as a writer.

The significance and subtle irony of the book's title does not become evident until we realize that the narrative of the writer's past encompasses the past of her own mother, Ellen, daughter of Scottish-Irish Catholic settlers in England, who lives in America but cleaves to England as the motherland. The implicit lesson Ellen absorbed while growing up in England was that "England ... was the source that gave [her a] sense of reality," her "sense of what was meaningful, [her] sense of what was meaningless" (20). Ellen passes this sense of nostalgic belonging and identity onto her daughter. This will become the shared sense of identity across three generations of daughters, Ellen, Jane, and Jane's own daughter, Catherine. While cherishing this aspect of identity she shares with her mother, the writer places herself and her mother's family among those who possess a legacy of "fluid national identity and pervasive sense of loss," a "too real feeling of dislocation" (55, 59). For Sutterfield, personal identity becomes a metaphorical territory to be discovered and pieced together in the knowledge that "we can't go home again, but we will never be at home in our present lives until our memories can return to the places from which we have been severed" (52).

In many ways this is a narrative about other kinds of dislocations and doubleness, exploring in personal terms the space of woman and the space of mother, and suggesting that the space is "both double and foreign" (26). Sutterfield captures a number of creative tensions that inform her sense of self. First, she recognizes the "growing distance between [herself] and [the] motherland" England (26) and senses that America is her true home. Second, on the one hand, she is aware of her mother's influence on her understanding of conventional womanhood and her belief in the schism between the role of mother and writer, a schism "deriving from the domestic spheres of home and parish" when the choices for women were "spinsterhood, a life in the church, or a husband and home" (23). On the other hand, Sutterfield loves

her mother and feels the need to honour her mother's brand of "Britishness," which she also recognizes in herself. Finally, although she loves her daughter unconditionally, Sutterfield experiences real "divisions" embodied in her infant daughter's unrelenting demands upon her mind and body that "besieged the very notion of self" and threaten to efface it (14).

Although this is primarily a personal text, it invokes a series of literary mothers. The writing and experience of women writers like the Brontes, Sylvia Plath, and Angela Carter provide a context for Sutterfield's own thoughts and experiences. Years of schooling did little to expand her understanding of motherhood and she lacked role models other than her own mother and the "litanies of self-denying, self mutilating saints, anchoresses, abbesses, nuns and holy women" (31). For Sutterfield, women writers elucidate the idea of motherhood and lead to the realization that the roles "of poet and mother were not so opposed" (111).

At the end of her memoir, Sutterfield suggests that she has come to accept her complex identity, but this reviewer detects a lingering tension. One wonders whether she has been able to achieve a fully integrated life as poet and mother.

Voices of Our Children: Stories of Music Education

Tatiana Bandurina.

Richmond, BC: Quintecco Educational Products, 2008.

Reviewed by Venus Prado

Prior to writing this review, I attended my sixth-grade niece's first music recital. That evening, I could not help but notice the excited anticipation of both spectators and performers. I, too, was looking forward to seeing the musical principles discussed in Tatiana Bandurina's *Voices of Our Children: Stories of Music Education* come alive. What I discovered, however, by evening's end surprised me.

While I was busy focusing on the spectators and performers, I did not realize that the person who would captivate and hold my interest throughout the evening would be my two-year old son Cameron. His delightful expressions throughout the evening transformed my musical experience into one of pure wonderment. Cameron engaged in loud clapping as the audience applauded. He shrieked with delight at appropriate, and several inappropriate, musical moments. When he finally escaped from his seat, midway through the concert, his body moved in sequence to the music as he ran up and down the stage ramp. Although Cameron was kicking and screaming as we left the