

interestingly, she details the role individual white British women played in this process highlighting tensions around ‘hygienic’ methods of child rearing. Indeed, policies that were seemingly innocuous, such as new methods for counting and keeping track of births and deaths, served the colonial governments in a multitude of ways.

De Barros presents a timely study of Caribbean reproductive policies, as well as the legacies of race, gender and colonialism as they continue to affect ideas and policies in the region as a whole, engaging intimately with ideas about sexuality and population growth and tropical disease. By placing reproduction centrally in her work, De Barros’s new book makes a welcome contribution to the literature on post-slavery societies, nicely situating her gendered historiography within Caribbean Studies and work on the African diaspora. This text will be of urgent importance to the fields of Caribbean history and sociology, as well as mothering and motherhood in a global context.

## Wood

Jennica Harper.

Vancouver: Anvil Press, 2013.

REVIEWED BY DORSÍA SMITH SILVA

In *Wood*, Jennica Harper contemplates the multiple meanings of “wood” by revealing the complex layers of parent-child relationships in the stories of imaginary children, surrogate caregivers, fictitious father figures, and disillusioned progeny. Divided into six sections, the volume articulates the stories of wooden objects, wooden people, and wooden situations. While the connections between some of the poems are tenuous, the volume succeeds in Harper’s skill to manipulate the definitions of wood and conjure new understandings of parenthood.

The first section titled, “Realboys: Poems for, and from, Pinocchio,” is told from the prospective of the wooden childlike puppet Pinocchio who was made by the woodcarver Gepetto. As in the childhood tale, Pinocchio wants to become a real boy, attend school, and please his father-figure and creator Gepetto. Yet, his inability to become human causes great distress in “Where It Goes”: “But I have no blood to offer. No cells, / no jellyseeds

racing through / veins I do not have.” Likewise, Pinocchio feels a sense of deep sadness that he cannot be a “realboy” that ripens into manhood in “Ms. Blue”: “Sweet child wants so badly / to be a man. How hard it was / to tell him he’ll always be / a sapling. Puppets / don’t grow.” The concluding poem in this section, “Every Good Boy,” plays with the juxtaposition of Pinocchio coming from “good wood,” but not being “good” since he tells lies.

Harper shifts the perspective to a young female caretaker of a disabled child in the second section, “Liner Notes.” As the speaker listens to “Crimson and Clover” by Tommy James and the Shondells, she links numerous details from her life, the young child’s life, and the history of the song and singers. These connections represent her interpretations of “wooden” relationships: a failing relationship with her boyfriend, the abrupt disbanding of Tommy James and the Shondells, and the child’s weary parents that argue “in the kitchen like dishwashers / going through their cycles” and “shout the shouts / of the very tired.” On other hand, the child represents the possibility of “would”: a trajectory full of infinite outcomes, since her life is in the beginning stages of development. By the end of the poem, the speaker parallels her uncertainty of her future role in society with the dubious meaning of “Crimson and Clover”: “There are various interpretations of the meaning of ‘Crimson and Clover’ / ... Many continue to believe it’s simply about being high, floating, synesthesia, / letting go.”

Building upon the father-son dynamic in section one, the father figure is reconfigured as various iconic Hollywood movie stars in section three. Harper deftly brings into the imaginary pop culture references when the speaker’s father adopts the personas of Jack Nicholson, Robert Redford, Kevin Costner, Roman Polanski, Peter Falk, and Steve McQueen. Yet, these poems appear to threaten to disrupt the overall congruity of the volume and should have been placed after section one to continue the exploration on fathers.

Harper focuses on poems about Erik Weisz (Harry Houdini) and his wife in the fourth section, “The Box.” In particular, she explores their childless marriage and imaginary children. Poems such as “Dream Child,” “Dream #2,” and “Dream Child #3” envision the personalities of three different children. “Wife” intensifies the emotional toil between the childless couple, especially when Houdini as the speaker/poet states, “You want her to want / those children. Then she’d be missing something, like you.” As in the previous sections, the couple’s vacillation between emotional connection and disconnection represent “wooden” relationships and the wood/would possibilities.

The imaginary and hypothetical realms dominate “Would.” This section begins with a poem about Lizzie Borden’s parents who are unable to have children. Harper also includes a poem about a miscarriage where the speaker

“imagined” “a quiet loss.” Unfortunately, the loss becomes traumatic when “the bleeding won’t stop.” The section ends with “Ring in the Grain” and chronicles the birth of a child to manhood. By the end of the poem, he wonders about life’s infinite possibilities—a position similar to the speaker in “Crimson and Clover.”

Harper returns to exploring parent-child relationships and pop culture in the last section. All of the poems are told from the point of view of Sally Draper, the sassy daughter of Don and Betty Draper on the television show *Mad Men*. While she recounts some tales of Sally’s coming-of-age, such as watching *Jaws*, having a first kiss, buying red lipstick, and having an abortion, Harper uses some of these poems to also examine social, racial, and familial stratifications. In “Sally Draper: Upwardly Mobile,” Sally recalls her mother’s enviable position: “At home, my mother had it made and brought to her by the help.” Likewise, when Sally has lunch with her former maid Carla in “Sally Draper Takes Carla Out for Lunch,” she finds herself criticizing the maid’s mannerisms—a habit she inherited from her upper class mother. Sally’s father also draws her censure when she buys him the book *The Spy Who Came In From the Cold* and hopes he will “see / the symbolism— / a man wanting / out.” The poems in *Wood* distinctly exemplify how connections and disconnections form a series of variations in relationships. They also acknowledge the parent-child dynamic in all its evolving forms, which leave a powerful impact. Most importantly, the volume unveils the lives of sons, daughters, fathers, and mothers, and denotes a new world of experiences of motherhood.

## Milk Fever

Lissa M. Cowan.

Bradford, ON: Demeter Press, 2013.

### REVIEWED BY SUDY STORM

The age-old story about the milk revealed a greater truth that science could not easily capture like a bee or butterfly to fix with a pin for study. (151)

Lissa Cowan uses fiction to tell truth. Her novel reminds us that women carry ancient wisdom that has been suppressed for centuries. She weaves her story of oppression and gender inequality in France at the end of the eighteenth century, a time of political unrest when the French Revolution was beginning