

mockery of Daphne Merkin's contention that marriage is "the only practicable game in town for most of us." The Fat Lady, aka Natalie Kusz, is the foil to all women who revel in their sexual capital. By virtue of her girth, she exists outside the economy of desire and, as such, is written out of the game. Her girth forecloses the kinds of choices and intimate connections available to so many of Hanauer's other contributors. On the other hand, the fat lady *can* sing, as the title indicates: she is no longer just an object, a fat body taking up too much space, in other people's realities. Her writing voice, her very subjecthood, is a vital force. Indeed, despite an emotionally-deprived poverty-stricken childhood in Alaska, and the vicissitudes of very young teen-motherhood, she is economically self-sufficient and professionally successful, as her inclusion in this collection indicates.

One of the limitations of this collection is the absence of lesbian voices, despite the fact that lesbians are increasingly invested in the family-making enterprise. In Vermont, they can marry. Many are choosing to reproduce. Many are deeply embedded in the family versus work dynamic and their family arrangements model for the rest of us a more equitable division of domestic labour. The book is not about otherness, however; it is about heterosexuals, normative types within the professional class, the placeholder for the former angel of the house. It offers up a collective computing of the costs and benefits of feminism for this professional, highly educated class of women. To be sure, while the volume clearly comes out on the side of the benefits, a generous dose of therapy sessions appears, for some contributors, to be the flip side of choice. Angst aside, however, power over the future (over the re/production of the species, over family formation, over societal norms) has clearly shifted to these women. What they have sacrificed is time-for-self, but as Hanauer writes in her preface, she would choose her life again—the stresses of having it all, love, kids, and career—in a heartbeat.

## **Giving Birth in Canada, 1900-1950**

Wendy Mitchinson

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002

### **Reviewed by Deborah Davidson**

Historian Wendy Mitchinson's *Giving Birth in Canada, 1900-1950* inspires the sociological imagination. Her book documents the history of giving birth in the first half of the twentieth century, a little examined period of childbirth history in Canada. During this time, childbirth—at home or in hospital—came under the increasing control of the medical professions. Mitchinson acknowledges feminist arguments that focus on the ill-effects of medicalization and the search for women's agency in childbirth. She focuses, however, on the medical

professions in Canada and recognizes that “reproduction was (and is) in part socially constructed and that it tells us much about the culture in which it occurred” (7). She seeks to analyze “the structure of medicine rather than the motivation of individual physicians” (10), and to identify and elucidate the ways in which “medical practitioners examined issues, saw problems, and described what they did” (10). Through incisive analysis, Mitchinson records the history of childbirth in Canada.

Mitchinson situates women and obstetric practice in historical context and describes how women in childbirth were treated by physicians. Her data includes document analysis and interviews with women who gave birth and the physicians who practiced in the first half of the twentieth century. Although Mitchinson recognizes that the women and their physicians were unequal in power, she reminds the reader that women were not without agency. Women regularly did not comply with the medical view that prenatal visits were necessary, and often they sought information from experts other than their physicians. Mitchinson attributes women’s resourcefulness to the exigencies of their responsibilities. Moreover, as physicians were subject to legal and normative constraints, neither were they completely autonomous. Yet it was women’s organizations, Mitchinson tells us, that favoured medicalized childbirth as it represented safety in the face of high maternal mortality during the first forty years of the twentieth century. Awed by modern medicine rather than individual physicians, women sought the relative safety offered by modern obstetrics.

*Giving Birth in Canada* is accessible and thoroughly researched. In linking childbirth as experience with the medical profession as institution, Mitchinson’s historical account provides fertile ground for what C. W. Mills calls the sociological imagination, a place where biography and history meet.

## **Nursing Mother, Working Mother: The Essential Guide for Breastfeeding and Staying Close to Your Baby After You Return to Work**

Gale Pryor  
Boston: Harvard Common Press, 1997

### **Reviewed by Rachel Westfall**

*Nursing Mother, Working Mother* reminds readers that breastfeeding is the healthiest, simplest, and most economical way to nourish a baby. In Western societies, many women take time off from their careers to give birth, and must soon find a balance between mothering and work. Through confession and