

Book Reviews

Part two of the book is best described in the authors' own word as a "curriculum." Chapters seven through seventeen cover the corresponding year in daughters' lives. Topics such as friendship, menstruation, body image, safety, and sexuality are covered at ages when they are most applicable to the girls' experiences. Each chapter provides background information on these topics and suggests the types of conversations and activities in which the mother-daughter group could engage to explore these topics together. While I had difficulty imagining myself engaged in some of the suggested activities, I was convinced by the proposition that I could intentionally involve other women in the raising of my daughter.

Although Hamkins and Shultz are psychotherapists, their book often reads like a self-help book. Notably absent from the book are fathers, although that is understandable given the nature of the project. More problematic, however, is the absence of any discussion of how such a group could address the problems facing minority and/or poor mothers and daughters. For example, the chapter on body image focuses on appreciating women of all sizes and shapes, with no discussion of skin colour or hair types. Since all the women in the authors' own mother-daughter group were working professionals, this book will be most helpful to readers who are interested in starting their own group—and who have the time and resources to do so.

Sleep Solutions for Your Baby, Toddler and Preschooler: The Ultimate No-Worry Approach for Each Age and Stage

Ann Douglas.

Mississauga: John Wiley & Sons, 2006.

Reviewed by Sonja Boon

I first encountered the work of Ann Douglas as a prospective parent. Her humorous and down-to-earth approach drew me in: rather than prescription, admonishments, and mother-blame, her work offered relevant insights and information culled from a combination of scientific evidence, recognized parenting theories, and, most importantly, the experiences and words of a legion of actual parents, all presented in a positive manner.

This approach characterizes Douglas's latest book, *Sleep Solutions for Your Baby, Toddler and Preschooler*. Douglas, a seasoned writer whose published books now number twenty-eight, here discusses one of the most common challenges of parenthood: infant, toddler, preschooler—and, as she stresses, parent—sleep. Douglas does not venture into unexplored territory; indeed, the parenting literature on infant and toddler sleep is immense and includes such

diverse offerings as Richard Ferber's *Solve Your Child's Sleep Problems* (1985), Elizabeth Pantley's *The No-Cry Sleep Solution* (2002), and the controversial but still highly popular work of Gary Ezzo, *On Becoming Babywise* (1995). But Douglas takes a decidedly different approach to a familiar subject. While Ferber, Pantley, Ezzo, and others offer distinctive and clearly outlined methods for overcoming sleep problems, Douglas offers a smorgasbord of possibilities. Not only does she outline and summarize the perspectives of the recognized experts in the field, but she also gives equal time to her own panel of non-experts—a group of experienced parents who all have dealt with their own children's sleep problems.

It is, in fact, Douglas's choice to share the stage with a series of non-experts that makes her work stand out. By engaging with the voices and experiences of more than 170 individual parents "in the trenches," she rejects one expert voice in favour of the understanding of a community of equals, thus reclaiming the fraught terrain of parenting in the name of parents themselves, and enabling them, at an individual level, to make the choices that will best suit their particular family situation.

Also distinctive is Douglas's writing style. Eschewing the formal and prescriptive language of many parenting books, Douglas prefers an often humorous, tongue-in-cheek approach that includes frequent references to popular culture and emphasizes not only the challenges of raising children, but also the contortions of parenting.

The end result is a positive approach to parenting which respects both child and parent, places control in the hands of the parent rather than the expert, emphasizes the value of individualized approaches which can more fully meet the needs of children and parents, and, finally, encourages parents to accept and honour the parenting choices they make.

By *The Secret Ladder: A Mother's Initiation*

Frances Greenslade.

Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2007.

Reviewed by Fiona Joy Green

"Becoming a mother brings you close to the bone, to blood, to shit, to mortality and your absolute worst fears. It may be sweet, but it can also be dark and dangerous." (xxv)

In 2003, Frances Greenslade won the Saskatchewan Book Award for non-fiction for *A Pilgrim in Ireland*. I believe she has another winner in *By The*