

BOOK REVIEWS

Kogawa-Canute); leaving home to support one's children (Sampang); finding the story of one's journey (Mayor); and coming full circle to discovering what is gained and what is sacrificed through mothering (Conlin).

Mothers in All But Name: Grandmothers, Aunts, Sister, Friends, Stranger, Nannies

Marguerite Guzman Bouvard.
Nicholasville, Kentucky: Wind Publications, 2009.

Reviewed by Michele Hoffnung

Marguerite Guzman Bouvard's *Mothers in All But Name* is a collection of first-person narratives by women who are mothers of children born to other women. The volume offers varied perspectives on the complexity of mothering, specifically the regular caring for and tending of children by women that occurs outside of the nuclear family. As the author of "Sheree" writes, "The word mother conjures up love and kindness. You may have children and not behave as a mother. You may not have children and be a mother" (165). Love and kindness inform all the narratives gathered in this collection.

The book provides ample evidence that one need not be a biological mother to be a mother in all but name, but being identified as a "mother" is critical. In "The Only Son I'll Ever Know," Michelle Dunlap is the biological aunt to the "nephew/son" she mothered. Her younger sister had five children and family members raised the three eldest. In this moving narrative, Dunlap tells of not wanting to dishonour her sister. Hence, she did not allow her "nephew/son" (her sister's second child and Dunlap's only child) to call her "mother." Today, she regrets her decision and yearns for full recognition of their mother-son relationship.

Identification is only one problem for "other" mothers. Every child needs to be mothered, but every child also needs to account for his or her biological mother. In "The Fabric of Things," Mariève Rugo recalls Nurse, who was with her consistently from birth and served in every way as her mother. She also admits that "part of me yearned for my mother" (161). In fact, in each of the narratives collected here, the biological mother either is absent or unavailable to the child due to death, incapacity, or choice. Because the mothering relationship of "other" mothers is predicated upon loss of the biological mother, the child has a longing that cannot be answered by the other mother,

no matter how well she mothers and how much her mothering means to the child. The absence of the “real” mother contributes to mothers-in-all-but-name feeling under-recognized and under-valued in their mothering role.

In addition, many women—grandmothers, aunts, sisters, neighbours, or friends who love both mother and child—regularly mother children who do have “good” mothers. In these cases, the good mother shares her child’s care with another woman who generously cares for her child. Grandmothers, in particular, provide ample mothering assistance that is well appreciated. Yet, no one names these mothering women “mothers.” We lack language that distinguishes mothers-in-all-but-name from biological mothers and from those of us who assist but do not replace biological mothers.

A diversity of race, ethnicity, and social class is represented in this volume. Some women are professionals whose narratives probe issues beyond their own experiences. Stephanie Wasserman’s “Mothering Foster Children” is particularly informative. Candace Simar’s “Other Mothering” highlights the pain of having to relinquish care of children to home situations that are less than ideal. These narratives, which explore non-normative experience, bring new perspectives to motherhood. Bouvard is to be commended for highlighting “the many permutations of mothering and the circumstances surrounding it” (4) and for acknowledging these relationships for the benefit of “mothers” and children alike.

Mother to Mother: Honest Advice From Women Who Have Been Through It Already

Kathleen F. McCue.

Amarillo, Texas: Hale Publishing, 2012.

Reviewed by Janet E. Smith

Kathleen F. McCue’s new book, *Mother to Mother*, functions as a “new mothers group.” It is composed entirely of answers from 57 new mothers to questions posed by McCue. The answers are intended to guide new mothers in caring for newborns and gauging the prevalence and “normalcy” of their experiences. Not all mothers replied to every question, but enough did to make this book a useful resource for women adjusting to new motherhood.

The book includes 23 chapters on a wide range of topics, including family issues; breastfeeding issues; coping strategies; helpful (and not so helpful) gadgets; classes; books; online websites; suggestions and advice from other