

The last line of the poem encapsulates the power of motherhood. As Nahum describes his daughter seated at the kitchen table having tea with her mother, Laike reads her tea leaves and sees a happy future; Hannah turns to her father and announces: “*you see, Pa / I told you / if Ma says, / it’s true*” (101).

*Laike and Nahum* is a gentle and moving book that tells a story of motherhood, love, and survival.

## **We, The Women**

Merle Nudelman.

Toronto: Guernica Editions, 2006.

### **Reviewed by Rosie Rosenzweig**

Merle Nudelman’s first volume of poetry, *Borrowed Light*, probed her personal history. Now, in *We, The Women*, the poet examines specifically female subjects, including pregnancy and childbirth (even losing weight after delivery), children, mothering, dinner with mothers-in-law, and the inevitable memories of her own mother. She also limns the tender vulnerability of a young molested girl, as well as the mature career women molested under the corporate guise of billable hours.

The poignancy of “Variations of the Last Time” that she saw her mother, and “Mama Loshen,” about the native language of her mother, both rekindled memories of my own immigrant mother in Windsor, Ontario. Nudelman evokes her mother’s mother tongue of Yiddish:

I fit our words like puzzle pieces  
into the sounds I knew,  
stored these clues of meaning  
inside my own secret cache.  
I clicked them on to light your stories –  
My lanterns into your Slavic wilderness.

Nudelman ranges widely across poetic form. Her repertoire includes lyrics, sestinas, pantoums, concrete poems, some modified sonnet forms, even a ghazal. Her adroit use of repetition showcases her natural cadence and rhythm.

The title poem, “We, the Women,” describes women as

tender repository of people-eggs,  
tucked within like so many snug peas.  
Calm spheres, each waiting her turn

[stanza break]

To burst the pod...

Moon-women, ...

We sprinkle that knowing-dust  
Into our daughter's eyes.

And men? They are "that thrashing," a mere staccato lunge into fecundity and then no longer central to the heritage of women.

## Lying to Our Mothers

Katherine Lawrence.

Regina: Coteau Books, 2006.

### Reviewed by Nancy Gerber

Katherine Lawrence's collection of poetry, *Lying to Our Mothers*, is the poetic equivalent of a bildungsroman, the novel that explores personal growth. Memorable and moving, these poems map the speaker's journey from girlhood to womanhood. With its emphasis on images and memory rather than plot and sequential time, poetry is a genre especially suited to representing the complexities and contradictions of maternal subjectivity, allowing readers to witness the speaker's transformation from daughter to mother and from being her mother's daughter to becoming her daughter's mother.

The poems are divided into four sections. The first, "You Knew – Didn't You?", explores the emotional geography of female coming-of-age in the 1960s: the desire for freedom and adventure, the value and vicissitudes of girls' friendships, the pain of mother-daughter conflict. In "Mud Wars," the tension between a strong-willed mother and an equally strong-willed daughter is announced: "Our first house / a battlefield / because the address told us so: 61 Battlefield Drive, / the ravine across the road / site of all our wars: mother versus a small muddy daughter" (3). The speaker brings her feminist perspective to bear in acknowledging her mother's domestic entrapment: "How could we stop ourselves? / You tied at the waist / to stove and sink. Me, fixed on spring's wild / riot beyond the door" (3).

The second section, "The Soft Give of Flesh," includes an eponymous poem where a mother meditates on the impossibility of protecting a teenage daughter from violence: "She is immunized against pertussis / tuberculosis,