

messenger of death, not in the negative sense of the word, but in that he brings the news of the cruel and sudden miracle of the cycle of our lives" (127).

Waiting in the Wings is superbly written, a work that maintains and develops Chicana literary conventions in unexpected and thrilling ways that can be appreciated by a general audience.

My Lesbian Husband: Landscapes of a Marriage

Barrie Jean Borich
St Paul: Graywolf Press, 1999

Reviewed by Elisabeth Speller

My Lesbian Husband is part memoir, part cultural exploration, and part love story, conceived as creative non-fiction. Here, Barrie Jean Borich explores the ways that words and actions inform and reform one another. She poses the question "Are we married?"—"we" being herself (a recovered alcoholic femme lesbian) and her butch lover of twelve years, the eponymous husband, Linnea. These two women are firmly set in the various milieux of their lives: their neighbourhood, their different families, and their various friends, both heterosexual and gay-lesbian-transgender-queer.

Throughout the book, it is as if we are eavesdropping on the innermost thoughts of the author as she examines the cultural institution of marriage. In attempting to define what it is that holds her own relationship together, she explores myriad other relationships: mothers and their offspring (as children and adults), brothers and sisters, straight marriages, lesbian and gay male relationships, and friendships. She draws on her own experiences as daughter, sister, sister-in-law, niece, aunt, lover, and friend, as well as her observations of family members. By foregrounding cultural identity – Eastern European and Japanese in her own case, Italian in Linnea's, and the many and varied identities throughout her neighbourhood – issues of race, ethnicity, and multiculturalism are raised.

In addition, Borich provides a plotted and eminently readable account of the many nuances of lesbian politics in the United States during the second half of the twentieth century. She illuminates such aspects of lesbian culture as butch/femme, feminist politics, race, class, sexuality, alcohol and drug use, and non-monogamy.

The book is full of contradictions and ambivalence, however. The reader

is never certain that Borich *wants* to be married, even when she and Linnea get married in a kitsch Las Vegas wedding ceremony officiated by a lesbian minister. We never really know whether she wants to fit in with the straight world of heterosexual couples or the seemingly subversive world exemplified by her quirky friends and neighbours, or does she flourish by being altogether different.

We do learn that the bonds that hold two people together can be as firm and strong as they are invisible. We are shown, however, that such bonds do not develop easily. This memoir/cultural exploration/love story, written with tenderness and toughness, utilizes a breathtaking range of sustained metaphors. As a poet, Borich brings a deft touch to this exploration of two people embedded in communities that can sustain, and also challenge, their members.

Halving It All: How Equally Shared Parenting Works

Francine M. Deutsch
Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999

Reviewed by Merryl Hammond

Do not be fooled by the clever title. *Halving It All* is a Harvard University Press publication: heavily footnoted, referenced, and indexed, it includes 11 chapters with such titles as “Creating Equality at Home,” “Career Detours,” “The Mother and Mr. Mom,” and “Equality Works.” It is not an easy book to read. Author Francine Deutsch tries to put human faces on complex family arrangements—“Steve and Beth stood in their kitchen discussing how they were going to manage the afternoon care of their four-year-old”—which is helpful. But several chapters later, when she again refers to Steve and Beth’s arrangements and their methods of negotiating, I could not recall their particular case, having since encountered so many other couples and their childcare arrangements. Nevertheless, Deutsch explodes many commonly-held myths about parenting and occasionally offers succinct, gem-like flashes of insight.

Examples of such gems include the following: “Daycare is the crucible on which ideals of equality are often destroyed” (159); “People change” (216); and “Couples create equality by the accumulation of large and small decisions and acts that make up their everyday lives as parents” (230). Deutsch also quotes the individuals she interviewed for her study: “We’re more equals. It’s more like I’m his wife, not his slave” (181); and “You can’t raise children by spectating” (216).