that she is 30 years old and capable of conservative spending) is the only time daughter and mother seem to be speaking to one another directly, rather than dithering over the details of daily life. Are most mothers so estranged from their daughters? While these thoughts can be teased out of the book, I wonder whether many readers will continue to the end.

Much love, Bec

The New Don't Blame Mother: Mending the Mother-Daughter Relationship

Paula J. Caplan
New York: Routledge, 2000

Reviewed by Gill Rye

The cover of *The New Don't Blame Mother* announces that "this book has the power to change your relationship with your mother or daughter." This is a self-help book, an updated and revised edition of Caplan's original bestseller first published in 1989. The author is a clinical research psychologist and, in popularizing her subject, she does not hesitate to blame therapists for contributing to the mother-blame that permeates society.

The second edition includes a preface that takes account of newly published material in the field. Here, Caplan also points to recent social changes, such as developments in reproductive technologies and new trends in parenting and family arrangements that impact on the ways mothers continue to be blamed in society. The discussion relates primarily to the United States and Canada (and due praise is given to the activities of ARM).

The thesis of the book rests on two assumptions: first, that most mother-daughter relationships are not merely ambivalent but frequently a source of great pain; and second, that one of the major causes of such difficulty is the extent to which society blames mothers for everything that is wrong with their children. In *The New Don't Blame Mother*, Caplan seeks to help mothers and daughters help themselves by learning from the experiences of others and by thinking positively. Social attitudes towards mothers are analyzed through the polarized myths of the Perfect Mother and the Bad Mother. The Perfect Mother is an unlimited, natural nurturer; the Bad Mother is, at once, the mother who stays home and the mother who has a paying job outside the home. Whether "perfect" or "bad," mothers are blamed for not conforming to stereotype.

Caplan writes social construction theory for a mass audience. Thus, blame is placed on society—which disadvantages women—not on mothers themselves. Caplan's point is that understanding the root of negative feelings helps us make positive changes in our relationships with our mothers, with our daughters, and with other people, especially since mother-daughter relations are felt to impact on all other relationships. She emphasizes "building bridges," "repairing the rift," and the value of communication. This self-help book argues for one important and laudable strategy: that women strive to humanize their mothers, since a mother is also a person, a woman in her own right.

Dutiful Daughters: Caring for Our Parents as They Grow Old

Jean Gould, ed.
Seal Press, 1999

Reviewed by Christine Peets

I had expected *Dutiful Daughters* to be a "how-to" book on caring for parents. What I found instead was a compelling collection of 22 essays not so much on the "mechanics" of caring for parents- arranging home care, nursing home care, and looking after finances- but the emotional rollercoaster of "doing it all."

In her introduction to the collection, editor Jean Gould shares her own experiences of caring for her own mother, first visiting a retirement home and then in her mother's apartment. For Gould, the world of eldercare is akin to travelling in a foreign country, without benefit of the knowledge of either custom or language. Although she writes about the United States, the experiences she described could be universal. As we age ourselves, we realize that our parents may reach the point of no longer being able to care for themselves. But they are the adults, and we are the children; therein lies the problem of giving care without taking over.

The essays explore many emotions, including those we do not always allow ourselves to express or, in some cases, even acknowledge. Mixed with one's love and respect for a parent is a melange of emotions: pride, remorse, guilt, anger, and anxiety. Strengths and weaknesses are discovered in both parents and children. Readers will feel empathy for, and perhaps identity with the writers in the volume, many of whom simply tell without telling us how they feel.

All of the essays are written by women; although, as Gould points out, this does not mean that sons do not care for aging parents. It is unfortunate that she