

financially—than their previous endeavours.

Albert's educational philosophy is based on ideas developed initially by Jean Jacques Rousseau and imported into North American educational thinking by John Dewey. Rousseau argued that, given a proper environment, the "noble savage" in a child will blossom into a successful and accomplished person. He felt that formal schooling is detrimental to the blossoming process, and that one learns better by "doing" rather than studying. Apparently, Rousseau's concern for the welfare of children was more theoretical than practical: he abandoned all five of his own children to orphanages. Albert takes the opposite approach by sacrificing his entrepreneurial career for the sake of his children's development.

The book is well written and a pleasure to read. It includes a rich bibliography, complete with the author's annotations on many of the sources. Its language is sophisticated, clear, and succinct. For the reader who agrees with Albert and Rousseau's thinking, this book will prove satisfying. For the opponent, there is much "meat" in which to sink one's intellectual teeth.

Transformative Motherhood: On Giving and Getting in a Consumer Culture

Linda L. Layne, ed.
New York: New York University Press, 1999

Reviewed by Jeanne-Marie Zeck

Transformative Motherhood, a collection of anthropological essays, is a valuable book for parents and educators. Linda Layne and her contributors present research on mothers and children who have been marginalized in American culture and, until recently, neglected by anthropologists. In this collection, the authors examine the experiences of adoptive mothers, birth mothers, and their children; surrogate mothers; foster mothers; and mothers of physically and mentally handicapped children. Layne herself presents research on women who have lost children through miscarriage, stillbirth, and death in infancy. What unites these essays is an examination of the rhetoric of gift giving and receiving. Each author analyzes how those in her particular research group use gift terminology to explain their experiences, to define themselves, and to grant full humanity to children who often are dismissed by a culture that focuses on physical "perfection."

Adrienne Rich's 1976 history of childbirth in America, *Of Woman Born*, was the first academic study to include a mother's personal account of care giving. In the tradition created by Rich, the anthropologists in Layne's book seamlessly incorporate their own experiences of mothering into their research.

This assertion of personal maternal experience as a form of expertise is a significant feminist claim. Throughout *Transformative Motherhood*, the authors build on one another's research and often present subtle similarities and differences. The result is a cohesive collection that reflects the contributors' mutual respect.

American consumer culture, these authors believe, frequently focuses on superficial physical perfection. Only a woman who manufactures a perfect product (a physically and mentally "perfect" child) is considered a real mother. In opposition to such social prejudices, the authors in this volume assert the profound spiritual value of the gifts and lessons mothers give and receive through their experiences as life givers and caretakers. As Gail Landsman notes in her essay, "Mothers of children with disabilities talk about reassessing values, realizing true priorities, putting things in perspective, and above all, being less judgmental of others. The child's gift of knowledge of unconditional love provides mothers a vocabulary with which to develop a critique of consumer culture" (159).

Mothers also use the rhetoric of gift giving to discuss their contributions to society. For example, Danielle F. Wozniak discusses the role of foster mothers: "Through transformative relationships with children, women healed a portion of their community and contributed to overall social reform. Through mothering work, women saw themselves as family makers, professional caregivers, and community healers" (89). Both researchers and mothers note that these gifts are deeply valuable and could, if understood by others, benefit and possibly transform American culture.

The essays in *Transformative Motherhood* are well written, engaging, and important. They will be especially helpful to parents who have been marginalized by mainstream American culture. This volume is suitable for women's studies courses and courses on motherhood and/or disabilities.

Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare and the State, 1890-1930

Molly Ladd-Taylor
Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994

Reviewed by Stephanie Chastain

Marshall McLuhan once said that the politics was the offering of "yesterday's answers in response to today's questions." It seems that what McLuhan failed to take into account was that today's questions are not very different from those