

myths of Avalon. She takes us on a fascinating journey through ancient myths and Renaissance scholarship.

Finally, Weinbaum takes us to the Isla Mujeres (Island of Women) off the coast of Yucatan. Here, she shares her daily life as diviner, graduate student, pregnant woman, and later as mother to illustrate the cultural collision of “primitive folk wisdom” and the “advanced Western mind.” Weinbaum claims, “we project a transference onto the island’s opaque open door from our own need to compensate for loss in Modern society” (161). Readers learn how Weinbaum and the indigenous people relate: she comes from the culture the islanders envy and mimic, while she is searching for what predates tourism and the stage-managed, packaged local culture. These oppositions come together in her experience of childbirth where she is attended by a senora midwife, a British woman doctor, and a local young woman educated to be a nurse. Although she seeks guidance from her midwife, Weinbaum’s fear and lack of knowledge cause her to turn to the British doctor during labour. She acknowledges that we are “part and parcel of what we study” (234) and finally comes to see how Amazons and islands of women are rendered invisible. Weinbaum concludes that in the “unhinged culture” of America, people are searching for “an Eden of sustained nurturance” (239). She invites her female readers to create their own stories of Amazons, to deepen their sense of being embodied, generative, and spiritual women.

Mothers and Motherhood: Readings in American History

Rima D. Apple and Janet Golden, eds.
Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1997

Reviewed by Donna Varga

Mothers & Motherhood: Readings in American History brings together a compilation of social and cultural writings on the issue of mothering as constructed and lived. Of twenty-five chapters, all but three have been previously published; with one exception, the chapters were first published in the 1980s or 1990s. The readings have been organized into four thematic sections: the social construction of motherhood; motherhood and reproduction; social and cultural settings; and public policy. Within each section, contributions cover a variety of issues and focus on a range of historical periods. For example, the section on the social construction of motherhood includes a chapter on breastfeeding and

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infant care in England and America from the late 1500s to the late 1700s; a chapter on mother love in the nineteenth century; and a chapter on maternal grief arising from miscarriage, stillbirth, or infant death during the period 1920-1985. The section on public policy includes chapters on topics such as health, birth control, and maternal employment. While the majority of the book focuses on European and American women, eight chapters deal specifically with minority cultural groups. Two examples are Loretta J. Ross's, "African American Women and Abortion, 1800-1970" and George J. Sanchez's "Go after the women': Americanization and the Mexican Immigrant Woman, 1915-1929."

The thematic organization of the book allows for a wide variety of topics and eras to be covered. As a result, however, *Mothers & Motherhood* does not thoroughly discuss a single period or topic. This might not suit readers who are seeking a focussed examination of a specific issue. Readers also will find that the book does not offer a comprehensive study of mothering history. Rather it encourages knowledgeable readers to discover connections among the various chapters.

Since much of the book consists of reprinted material, many scholars already may be familiar with its content. The range of readings included, however, and the narrow scope within which most academics work, makes it likely that many will uncover new material. The book will be useful in women's studies courses, since most chapters will be accessible and interesting to undergraduate students. In my own experience of teaching of Rima Apple's "Constructing Mothers: Scientific Motherhood in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," I received enthusiastic feedback from students and found that the chapter more than adequately dealt with the issues of child development and mothering. In addition, graduate students and those teaching specialized courses on mothering will find the book useful. The editors' provision of bibliographies for each section extends the value of the book. Overall, the high quality of the book's content and its range of material make it highly suitable for personal and institutional libraries.

Fragments of Motherhood

Batya Weinbaum
E. Montpelier, VT: Angel Fish Press, 1996

Reviewed by Roxanne Harde

In the three brief poems included in this chapbook, Batya Weinbaum captures the essence of mothering a toddler. Weinbaum's work, both free verse and