

multiple cultures while raising their children in mixed race unions. Emotions run close to the surface of these essays which describe the wonder and challenges of raising children in different cultures and countries and the lessons learnt in the process.

Some of the essays emphasize the enriching potential of mothering in a multicultural context. Bilingualism not only involves two languages but the understanding of two world views. Violeta Garca-Mendoza writes of the gift of bilingualism and biculturalism as the “magic of being able to go and come back constantly between place and time” (41). For Saffia Far, having her babies delivered in Kyrgyzstan made her appreciate her own health and enjoy her pregnancy away from the “obsessive commercialism of the West” (36). Katherine Barrett’s temporary stay in South Africa gave her an enhanced awareness and sensitivity for other mothers for whom mothering in the midst of violence and poverty was everyday reality. Leza Lowitz’s piece reminds us of how beautiful it can be when two cultures wholeheartedly embrace a child and how a multiracial child can, in turn, overcome the limitations of culture to accept the best of all worlds.

Immigrant mothers struggle with their children’s inability to understand their world views. Some fear their children’s loss of language; others obsess over food and music. At the heart of the collection lies the maternal desire to fill the child’s life with the language, food, and culture that shaped the mother’s life but which now seem far removed from the child’s everyday experience.

When children are raised in multiple cultures there is also a fear that they may not fully adapt to any one culture. Some mothers are anxious to help their children meet the challenge of trying to straddle multiple cultures and learn multiple languages. As the collection shows, however, many of the mothers—not their children—cleave to the past and are bound by their own fears. The mothers themselves need to see the beauty in their present lives and their children often serve as their guides.

## **Mothering and Blogging: The Radical Act of the MommyBlog**

May Friedman and Shana Calixte, eds.  
Bradford, ON: Demeter Press, 2009.

### **Reviewed by Kryn Freehling-Burton**

Both mothering and blogging are acts of perpetual reproduction and relationship building. As Judith Stadtman Tucker states in the foreword to *Mothering*

and *Blogging*, “Relationships situated exclusively in the maternal blogosphere are ... a performance of friendship based on the perception of shared experiences and values.... The paradox of virtual relationships is that they are largely symbolic, and—on an emotional level—completely real” (10). For many women, blogging gives meaning to their experience as mothers.

The essays gathered here cover a range of blogging topics from celebrity moms to disabled moms, from pregnancy to adoption to invitro fertilization to infertility. Included is an essay by a woman whose interactions with mommyblogs finally convinced her that motherhood through pregnancy and birth was not what she wanted. Reading pregnancy and parenting blogs “didn’t save me from an objectively unpleasant outcome. It merely equipped me with information. What I did with that information was up to me” (62).

The book presents “a chorus of voices” (30), but this chorus is problematized by many of the contributors: “The mamasphere continues to reproduce oppressive hierarchies, where the voices of the white, the able, the middle class and the heterosexual are often heard first and most often” (29). It is this analysis of the mamasphere that makes this volume particularly valuable to scholars and mommybloggers alike. Editors Calixte and Friedman identify as “queers racializing the family tree” (74). Recognizing that the mamasphere is overwhelmingly white and heterosexual in reality or ideology, they ask “why is it that white and straight mamas are not identifying their own issues of race and sexuality (normative as they are) in their own discussions of motherhood?” (77). Another contributor tackles the common criticism that mommybloggers are parentally self-absorbed by asking “why is blogging about parenting ... considered more self absorbed than writing about, say, one’s trip to the North Pole by dogsled?” (130). In a society where women’s work and especially mothers’ work is undervalued and often derided, these are important questions to raise.

The contributors to *Mothering and Blogging* question whether the mamasphere can truly belong to mothers when it is so influenced by the marketplace. If mommybloggers edit or alter their voices in response to the marketers who frequent their sites, are these voices still (primarily) their own and, if so, are they still radical? One essay notes that the prospect of receiving monetary benefit from writing a blog is a hotly contested topic. It concludes that “The demand seems to be that mommybloggers should not put a value upon their written work, in much the same way that mothers generally are expected to not put a value upon the work that they do in the home” (95). In fact, few mommybloggers are receiving substantial income from blogging and there is evidence that this income is likely decreasing.

The collection concludes on a hopeful note: “Bloggers willing to write with transparency about motherhood provide a place of community for readers; within that community, blogs are often consciousness-raising; and, when taken as a group, these blogs change our understandings of normative motherhood. The personal motherhood blog is political” (Wilkins 152). Many of the bloggers in this collection claim, in fact, to have been changed by mommyblogs: “If we can harness all of the interest in the mamasphere and direct it towards improving the world for ourselves and our children, blogging will become a truly radical act” (Lawrence 139).

This volume should be required reading for scholars of mothering and technology. It “deliberately resist[s] the notion that only traditional scholarly knowledge is valid” (35) and will appeal equally to mothers who blog, mothers who read blogs, and contemporary news writers who seek to understand the complexity of mothering in the twenty-first century.

## **Mother Knows Best: Talking Back to the “Experts”**

Jessica Nathanson and Laura Camille Tuley.  
Bradford, ON: Demeter Press, 2009.

### **Reviewed by Susan Logsdon-Conradsen**

In today’s world, where a Google search for books on “parenting advice” yields over 1,150 results, *Mother Knows Best: Talking Back to the “Experts”* is a refreshing and much-needed anthology. Editors Jessica Nathanson and Laura Camille Tuley boldly challenge the overwhelming amount of “expert” advice on mothering and its underlying assumption that without such advice mothers would fail due to incompetence. By tackling controversial topics in a thought-provoking manner, their book offers a “feminist, mother-centered critique” of “expert” maternal advice.

The book includes critical perspectives on expert advice in four major areas of motherhood. A feminist analysis of politics and power dynamics unifies the volume, which emphasizes the point that mother wisdom is inherently unique. Some entries are traditional narratives, others include poetry, and several offer first-person accounts. “A Mosaic of Pregnancy Expertise” by Amber Kinser, for example, is a brilliant juxtaposition of quotes from medical texts and from mothers which demonstrates the limited capacity of traditional medical discourse to capture the true language of pregnancy. Similarly, “Creative Gestation” by Laura Major uses mother’s voices via childbirth poetry to illustrate the reality of birth.