

Stephens documents the devaluation of care work within capitalist markets and paints a compelling portrait of modern motherhood as fraught with any number of perceived failures. And yet, she neither chastises mothers who epitomize the neoliberal maternalism she is attempting to dismantle, nor does she praise mothers who reclaim domesticity as an extreme form of feminist agency. Moreover, Stephens does well addressing the limitations of essentializing motherhood.

*Confronting Postmaternal Thinking* offers a clear vision of how we can move forward in a feminist way that centralizes care as not only essential to mothering but beneficial to society as a whole.

## **Between Interruptions: 30 Women Tell the Truth about Motherhood**

Cori Howard.  
Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2007.

### **Reviewed by Elizabeth Howells**

In the July-August 2012 issue of the *Atlantic*, Anne-Marie Slaughter's "Why Women Still Can't Have It All" resulted in what the *Huffington Post* described as a "typhoon of debate" for exposing the myth of the work-life balance for women. In describing how "the feminist beliefs on which [she] had built [her] entire career were shifting under [her] feet," Slaughter concludes that it is dishonest and irresponsible for high-powered women to espouse that professional success can be achieved without great compromise or grave consequences. Her discussion explores the "unresolvable tensions between family and career" for women today and also suggests a paradigm shift as a solution to this profound dilemma. Cori Howard's *Between Interruptions: 30 Women Tell the Truth about Motherhood* is part of this dialogue.

Organized in five parts, thirty women (many professional writers, editors, journalists, and media figures in Canada) describe their personal experiences with difficult realizations and tough choices as mothers, professionals, and women. Echoing Slaughter's concern, Howard questions in her introduction: "How can you put yourself and your kids first at the same time?... It's hard to be satisfied when you are brought to believe you will have a fabulous career, a fabulous family, a fabulous social life and a fabulous house, and when you suddenly find yourself with all those things, you realize it's not at all fabulous;

that having those things means losing yourself; that motherhood has much more inherent value and joy than we were ever taught to believe; that having a job and kids and an 'equal' relationship or marriage is highly stressful, and not always possible" (17). Like Slaughter, Howard points to the mixed messages experienced by the current generation of women on the rise at work and in the trenches at home.

Through the lens of "Ambition," the writers in part one examine the impossible struggle for work-life balance for real-life mothers who are also aspiring foreign correspondents (Jiminez), stay-at-home writers (McKay), editors who become freelancers (Delap), first time sacrificers (Shaben), reformed jet-setters (Deol), and mothers who act like fathers of the previous generation (Olson). All of these essays and those that follow address not only ambition, but also the cost of that ambition and the psychic scars that result from the attempt to reconcile the divide between the separate public and private spheres. Jobs are quit, marriages are lost, and regrets are voiced in these narratives.

Under the heading "Anxiety," the writers in part two examine similar themes, and like Joanna Streetly in the opening selection identify the transformation and loss of identity concomitant with new motherhood when a "radical new dimension of [one's] psyche" is discovered. Part of this anxiety as the next two essays explore are a function of finding a support structure in new friendships for these new selves (Renzetti and Onstad), recognizing the new needs of these new selves such as facing one's own separation anxiety (Zeppa), overcoming an onslaught of doubt and unrealistic expectations (Kelly), and rejecting universal myths and narratives about the experience of motherhood (Ryan).

The ambition and anxiety of parts one and two give way to "Guilt" in part three. Lawrence becomes "unhinged" at not being the perfect breastfeeding mother; Bendall challenges perceptions of mothers with one child; Myers wrestles with the judgment of other family members as she struggles to reconcile the nanny complex; Woodend finds release in running when her body eschews sex; while Mate's guilt about her parenting takes the form of raging against and resenting her husband.

The essays in part four, "Devotion," explore variations on the previous themes by exploring the paradoxes, ambiguities, and angst, as well as the joy, promise, and possibilities of birthing and parenting through adoption (Olding); the fertility and parenting struggles of a lesbian couple (Rose); escape from reality in post-partum nesting (Moss); mixed feelings about extended nursing (Guin); giving oneself over to motherhood (Kreviazuk); and recognizing and supporting the autistic child (Klar-Wolfond).

Finally, the essays in part five concern motherhood and cancer (Lynk); survival in Greenland (Rice); comparing notes with one's mother (Kogawa and

Kogawa-Canute); leaving home to support one's children (Sampang); finding the story of one's journey (Mayor); and coming full circle to discovering what is gained and what is sacrificed through mothering (Conlin).

## **Mothers in All But Name: Grandmothers, Aunts, Sister, Friends, Stranger, Nannies**

Marguerite Guzman Bouvard.  
Nicholasville, Kentucky: Wind Publications, 2009.

### **Reviewed by Michele Hoffnung**

Marguerite Guzman Bouvard's *Mothers in All But Name* is a collection of first-person narratives by women who are mothers of children born to other women. The volume offers varied perspectives on the complexity of mothering, specifically the regular caring for and tending of children by women that occurs outside of the nuclear family. As the author of "Sheree" writes, "The word mother conjures up love and kindness. You may have children and not behave as a mother. You may not have children and be a mother" (165). Love and kindness inform all the narratives gathered in this collection.

The book provides ample evidence that one need not be a biological mother to be a mother in all but name, but being identified as a "mother" is critical. In "The Only Son I'll Ever Know," Michelle Dunlap is the biological aunt to the "nephew/son" she mothered. Her younger sister had five children and family members raised the three eldest. In this moving narrative, Dunlap tells of not wanting to dishonour her sister. Hence, she did not allow her "nephew/son" (her sister's second child and Dunlap's only child) to call her "mother." Today, she regrets her decision and yearns for full recognition of their mother-son relationship.

Identification is only one problem for "other" mothers. Every child needs to be mothered, but every child also needs to account for his or her biological mother. In "The Fabric of Things," Mariève Rugo recalls Nurse, who was with her consistently from birth and served in every way as her mother. She also admits that "part of me yearned for my mother" (161). In fact, in each of the narratives collected here, the biological mother either is absent or unavailable to the child due to death, incapacity, or choice. Because the mothering relationship of "other" mothers is predicated upon loss of the biological mother, the child has a longing that cannot be answered by the other mother,