

“imagined” “a quiet loss.” Unfortunately, the loss becomes traumatic when “the bleeding won’t stop.” The section ends with “Ring in the Grain” and chronicles the birth of a child to manhood. By the end of the poem, he wonders about life’s infinite possibilities—a position similar to the speaker in “Crimson and Clover.”

Harper returns to exploring parent-child relationships and pop culture in the last section. All of the poems are told from the point of view of Sally Draper, the sassy daughter of Don and Betty Draper on the television show *Mad Men*. While she recounts some tales of Sally’s coming-of-age, such as watching *Jaws*, having a first kiss, buying red lipstick, and having an abortion, Harper uses some of these poems to also examine social, racial, and familial stratifications. In “Sally Draper: Upwardly Mobile,” Sally recalls her mother’s enviable position: “At home, my mother had it made and brought to her by the help.” Likewise, when Sally has lunch with her former maid Carla in “Sally Draper Takes Carla Out for Lunch,” she finds herself criticizing the maid’s mannerisms—a habit she inherited from her upper class mother. Sally’s father also draws her censure when she buys him the book *The Spy Who Came In From the Cold* and hopes he will “see / the symbolism— / a man wanting / out.” The poems in *Wood* distinctly exemplify how connections and disconnections form a series of variations in relationships. They also acknowledge the parent-child dynamic in all its evolving forms, which leave a powerful impact. Most importantly, the volume unveils the lives of sons, daughters, fathers, and mothers, and denotes a new world of experiences of motherhood.

## Milk Fever

Lissa M. Cowan.

Bradford, ON: Demeter Press, 2013.

### REVIEWED BY SUDY STORM

The age-old story about the milk revealed a greater truth that science could not easily capture like a bee or butterfly to fix with a pin for study. (151)

Lissa Cowan uses fiction to tell truth. Her novel reminds us that women carry ancient wisdom that has been suppressed for centuries. She weaves her story of oppression and gender inequality in France at the end of the eighteenth century, a time of political unrest when the French Revolution was beginning

to gain momentum. French citizens struggled to survive censorship, taxation, and imprisonment during the reign of King Louis XVI and a gluttonous educated elite.

The story is told through the narratives of a poor young peasant girl, Céleste, about the wet nurse Armande, who has rescued Céleste from an abusive household where she is a servant. When the wet nurse returns to the home she shares with her father, she brings Céleste with her. Unlike other women of the era, Armande has been taught to read and write by her father, a man who believes that women should be educated. She passes her love of literature on to Céleste who she mentors along a path of female empowerment.

As a wet nurse, Armande is both respected and feared. The children who come into her care seem to be healthier and brighter than the other village children. It is believed that a woman's thoughts are passed on to a child through her milk and therefore children who suckle at Armande's breast will be smarter. She becomes an advocate for the education of women as she realizes while nursing her baby that women can read and breastfeed, unlike the commonly held social values of the time that declare women incapable of learning.

The book is filled with accurate herbal remedies for mothers and babies that are still used by midwives today. This ancient knowledge has been devalued as the biomedical model of health care has replaced the wisdom of women. In her search for guidance in dealing with a teething child, Armande consults the *Encyclopedia* only to find it written by "men of scientific methods using scholarly dissertations that are too stupid or inadequate to ever be applied." She consults a book written by a midwife in which cloves are recommended to ease the pain of teething. This binary opposition of male science versus female wisdom is present throughout the book and we see this reflected in our world today where women's wisdom is continually challenged by a belief in empirical evidence.

As the story progresses, Armande is ordered to Paris by the king to nurse his son who is sickly. In an act of defiance she refuses to respond to the summons, which ends in her kidnapping by agents of the king. Armande's defiance of the king and her advocacy of education for women are examples of single acts in a movement for women's rights. Women marching in the streets of Paris in protest of censorship and gender inequality speak to the power of women as a body of protest and leaders in social movements.

*Milk Fever* is a story of the struggles of women as told through the voice of a young narrator empowered by the mentorship of a brave woman willing to stand up to the powerful in advocacy of the vulnerable. Cowan brings to the forefront the ancient knowledge of the grandmothers, the universal strength of mothers to nourish and nurture, and the power of women to promote so-

cial change in a world of peril. She shows us how motherhood and social activism are related (DiQuinzio) to the discourse of maternalism in the context of patriarchal eighteenth century France. *Milk Fever* represents the timeless nature of our history as mothers and wise women.

### Work Cited

DiQuinzio, Patrice. "The Politics of Mothers' Movement in the United States." *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering* 8.1,2 (2006): 55-71.

## Birth of the Uncool: Poems

Madeline Walker.

Bradford, ON: Demeter Press, 2014.

REVIEWED BY LAURIE KRUK

Madeline Walker is one "Uncool" Mama ... a woman who has articulated her own struggles of maturation—through addiction, loss, divorce, the perils of parenting "different" children—in the form of moving, eloquent and funny poems. Now in her fifties, she urges us, in the title poem of her collection, *Birth of the Uncool*, to embrace aging artfully: "Undress and sit for me, darling, your / beautiful body, strong, aged, puckered, / built to last.... / Who cares if the kids see these / sketches tacked on our huge bulletin boards? / Who gives a shit what anybody / thinks of our uncool abandon?" (105). But before the speaker—arguably closely identified with the writer—arrives at this place of joyful abandon, she takes us through four stages which culminate in the new growth announced in her title section: "Recovery, Youth, Motherhood and Coming Home." The book begins in the darkness of "Shame," "Guilt" and "Hate," with *Recovery*, which confronts addictive behaviors ("recovery programs" are acknowledged by Walker) that make the young woman more vulnerable to insecurity or exploitation, as revealed in *Youth*. It movingly traces the change from innocence to experience in a contemporary urban context, a "Simplicity" pattern nightgown being replaced by dirty "bellbottoms" in "Coming of Age in Toronto." In "Schoolgirl," the poet probes the slow silencing of young women as a continuing part of their socialization. She retrospectively salutes her pre-adolescent self: "Oh knocky- / kneed chatty school girl I / was! I wish I could hug / her now in her then unself- / conscious