

handle events. Hercher effectively balances perspectives placing one opposing view not just against but within the context of another.

As the situation between these families unfolds, biological and relational claims play out in another way when Caleb has a bad accident, and his hostile parents refuse to let Mickey see him. “I am not his next of kin. I am not a family member” (300), he tells Robin, explaining that his loving relationship has no legal standing. Hercher deliberately juxtaposes this situation with the conflicts surrounding Sophie to suggest the complex nature of kinship and relationship rights, showing that these issues go beyond the particulars of any one situation.

The novel’s several mother figures provide interesting contrasts. Robin and Meredith emerge as surprisingly alike in their intensity. Lindsay, no less loving but more easy-going, offers an appealing contrast in her relaxed acceptance of Lily who, with all her oddities, thrives. The novel’s events relegate this mother and daughter to the sidelines, but whenever they appear, they draw attention and provide humour.

The novel plays out against the backdrop of the famous rivalry between the Boston Red Sox and the New York Yankees with the Boston team finally advancing to the 2004 World Series playoffs to break the Bambino’s curse. Both Robin’s and Meredith’s families are baseball fans. Hercher uses the game successfully as a reminder that curses can be reversed and that effort is as significant as luck in desired results. She provides a satisfactory conclusion without diminishing the characters’ emotional and psychological struggles as her concern is less with her characters resolving all their problems and more with the process of finding fulfilling lives amidst ongoing challenges.

Intensive Mothering: The Cultural Contradictions of Modern Motherhood

Linda Rose Ennis, ed.
Bradford, ON: Demeter Press, 2014

REVIEWED BY JUDITH LAKÄMPER

Linda Rose Ennis’ essay collection consists of 17 essays which aim to “re-visit and reexamine” (1) Sharon Hays’ groundbreaking study, *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*, published in 1996. Therein Hays argues that according to contemporary intensive mothering (IM) ideology, the ostensibly selfless mother is solely responsible for raising her child, an activity which is

constructed as emotionally absorbing, labor and time intensive, child-centered, expert-guided, and financially expensive. This ideology, Hays posits, is significantly at odds with the dominant ideology of maximizing self-gain in capitalism, and thus puts an inordinate amount of pressure on mothers who try to live according to both ideologies. The present volume successfully reiterates the continued relevance of Hays' model, but also re-contextualizes some of its central tenets within the new and changed frameworks of neoliberalism and attachment parenting, among others.

The volume is separated into three parts and includes a multitude of voices from various disciplines and levels of expertise, giving it the wide perspectival range appropriate to any discussion of a topic so pervasive as contemporary mothering ideology. Authors explore the ramifications of IM ideology in theory and practice, present and future. The first section, "Understanding and Assessing Intensive Mothering," takes a theoretical approach through anthropological, sociological, and psychoanalytic lenses. The essays focus on a wide range of topics from the relationship between IM and neoliberalism to the negotiation between children's and maternal needs. Particularly insightful in this section is Helena Vissing's psychoanalytic inquiry into the effects of the taboos surrounding maternal ambivalence on the development of maternal and infant subjectivity as it emphasizes the productive potential of conflicting emotions which are a central, yet generally unspeakable effect of IM ideology. The second section, "Intensive Mothering Today," offers detailed analyses of single tenets of IM and how they affect maternal practice. Some essays focus specifically on class and consumerism as they both enhance and interfere with IM practices, while others discuss attachment parenting practices such as extended breastfeeding, the use of Sign Language with hearing babies, and Elimination Communication as contemporary techniques to assert and perform IM identities. The essays in the shorter third section, "Intensive Mothering: Staying, Leaving or Changing?" suggest new models of motherhood, ranging from the concept of what the author calls "Best I Can" practices and transpersonal motherhood to a reconceptualization of paternal involvement and the need for solidarity and empowerment in non-competitive maternal relations. While this last section presents multiple approaches to easing the pressure exerted on mothers by IM ideology, it does not fully link up with the politically oriented critique of neoliberalism offered in the preceding sections since none of the new models include concrete suggestions for policy changes. While the volume thus begins to conceptualize solutions to some of the problems it identifies, it also opens up space for further investigation into possible ways to counter the effects of IM ideology.

By giving voice to a wide range of perspectives, Ennis allows contradicting views on intensive mothering to coexist without attempting to dissolve