

there was a better division of labor than Daddy when he has time and Mommy all day, all night.” Unfortunately, Buchanan quickly drops such pertinent subjects in favour of less interesting topics, such the guilt associated with bottle-feeding or a mother’s embarrassment when her toddler utters an expletive.

Buchanan’s assumption that her audience is driven by media images of motherhood smacks of condescension. She should release mothers from false assumptions and offer them more of her occasional nuggets of modern wisdom. For instance, she does not link her own satisfaction derived from a rare afternoon devoted to work to a human being’s need to contribute to the world by performing valuable work. Although mothering is valuable, society considers it economically valueless. Instead of confronting the underlying issue of the worth of women’s work both as mothers and employees, Buchanan concludes disappointingly that she is “an idiot” for forgetting that, “for now at least, those two things are mutually exclusive.” Readers are left to wonder about Buchanan’s purpose in writing her book.

Still, Buchanan’s style is warm and readers cannot help but be engaged by such statements as, “Now, if you moms of teenagers could kindly stop laughing at me.” Although she concludes that “as a mother I am also constantly addressing the question of balance, trying to weigh my own wants and needs against my daughter’s, trying to balance my interests with hers,” her book clearly lacks balance. Buchanan concentrates on the mundane choices associated with motherhood and society’s judgment of those choices. She does not show how contemporary mothers balance their needs, feelings, and desires with those of other people—including their children.

Twice Alive: A Spiritual Guide to Mothering Through Pregnancy and the Child’s First Year

Beth Osnes
Boulder, CO: Woven Word Press, 2005

Reviewed by Juliana Forbes

I must begin by declaring that I am not an unbiased reviewer of Beth Osnes’s *Twice Alive: A Spiritual Guide to Mothering Through Pregnancy and the Child’s First Year*. My children’s births and lives are woven inextricably throughout its words since I am a near and dear friend of the author. In fact, she and I, with two other mother friends, founded Mothers Acting Up, a movement to mobilize the vast political strength of mothers to protect the world’s children. I have been privileged to read Osnes’s work in gestation, was a support through

its birth, and now feel like a proud father carrying it out to the world for all to see.

Twice Alive celebrates the majesty of birth and the developing child. Chapter by chapter, it travels with the mother through each trimester of pregnancy, the sometimes-experienced overdue phase, birth, and the child's first year. Each chapter begins by describing the particular gifts and challenges of each stage, followed by journal entries from the time when Osnes was pregnant with her daughter, Melisande, and ends with a suggested "to do" list that is both inspirational and practical, and includes designing your own birthing celebration, organizing meals to be brought after the birth, and forming a mothers' group. This is less a "how to" book than a companion that shares with its readers the intimate experience of mothering that is seldom talked about but is deeply felt. Not limited to a particular faith, this book roots itself in the soul-harvest that is reaped through the process of becoming a mother. Discoveries abound of the mother-like qualities of God and visa-versa.

As any mother can testify, new motherhood is extraordinary and, if attended to with a listening spirit, can be a time of great spiritual awakening for a woman. As Osnes says, a new mother "is in such close proximity to the ultimate creative spirit that she can feel its hot breath on the back of her neck." Osnes reminds us to prioritize the importance of early motherhood by pushing away the *invasive business of the world*, by lying on our backs in the grass with our babes on our chests, and by letting the warm blessings of the sun spill over us. I grew profoundly nostalgic while reading this book, particularly when I realized that the precious lessons and gifts of that insular time are no longer fresh in my memory. Osnes reminds me of how far I have traveled, what I have endured, and how much wiser I am now that I am a mother. As she explains: "Now you have twice a stake in the future. You have twice the reason to care about the legacy our generation is handing down to the next and twice the strength to make a difference. You have twice the accomplishments to cheer, twice the obstacles to conquer, twice the shoes to tie, twice the laughter and tears. If you feel twice as deeply and soar twice as high then, indeed, you must be twice alive."

A Life's Work: On Becoming a Mother

Rachel Cusk
London: Fourth Estate, 2001

Reviewed by Emily Jeremiah

Rachel Cusk brings a novelist's craft to bear on the experiences of pregnancy, birth, and parenting, and she does so with clarity and elegance. She writes