chapbooks incorporate exquisite paper, handsome endpapers, and interesting design elements, such as tipped-in photographs, original linocuts or folded paper, to make these limited editions distinctive and collector's items. {M}Other Tongue Press uses the raised stamp "Beautiful books make the heart sing" both as its logo and its motto and describes itself as "a private press specializing in beautiful limited signed editions of poetry, letterpress work, and book art." I could not agree more both with the singing heart and the description.

Each of these authors has contributed poetry to *Canadian Woman Studies*. Cathy Ford, the most seasoned of the feminist poets represented here, has previously published ten books of poetry. Part of *Cunnilingus, or How I Learned to Love Figure Skating* was performed at the "Second Annual Salt Spring Erotic Literary Evening" on Salt Spring Island in 1996. The work is a stream of consciousness ode to the sensuous body and mind using a creative compression of words to evoke young love, adult love, passion, sexual ecstasy, and the tensions of love. The poet skates in the heavens with "skin cold as ice" among "bodies that left me *cold*" with poems which sing with the rhythms of music. Using startling images such as "if you stick your tongue to a skate blade it will freeze in place" and rich, lush language such as "in the frosted glass greenhouse conservatory of our past life memory," this poetry mesmerized me into a language-induced trance, from which I had to shake myself at the end of the book. It is rare that writing of any kind can draw us completely out of ourselves and into the world of the writer. Cathy Ford is such a powerful writer.

Susan McCaslin won the first prize in the Third Annual Poetry Chapbook Contest for these poems, *Letters to William Blake*, and I can see why: they are original, cheeky, "with it," from the heart letters of a poet to her muse. In the days of TV reruns, Starbucks coffee, teaching as a "marketable skill," and doing the laundry, she says "Ah, Sunflower! I cling to your roots while dangling over the abyss." She also argues with Blake about his views on females, wonders about innocence and religion, congratulates him on Glad Day yet brilliantly brings it all back to Port Moody, clear-cuts, and her life as a poet, mother, and teacher.

Kate Braid won second prize in the Third Annual Poetry Chapbook Contest for *A Woman's Fingerprint* (Georgia O'Keefe Meets Emily Carr), drawn from O'Keefe's fictional journal of a trip she and Carr might have taken in 1930, in both New Mexico and British Columbia. Although inventive in concept and execution, if you know the work of the two artists and have seen the connection in their painting styles, words (even poetry) seem one dimensional in comparison to the painted canvases. Neither the language nor the scenarios convinced me of a true connection between O'Keefe and Carr.

If you love imaginative language and beautiful book-making, you will enjoy these engaging chapbooks, full of original thoughts, reflecting the lives of women. Cathy Ford's *Cunnilingus, or How I Learned to Love Figure Skating* gets the closest to the sensation of deeply felt and perfectly conveyed emotions. *Letters to William Blake* is fun and contemporary while *A Woman's Fingerprint* is an interesting intellectual exercise.

LE DOT DE SARA

Marie-Célie Agnant. Montréal: Editions du Remue-ménage, 1998.

PAR MONIQUE ROY

Née en Haiti, Marie-Célie Agnant vit à Montréal depuis 25 ans où elle travaille comme interprète culturelle auprès des communautés haitiennes et latino-américaines. C'est dans le cadre d'une recherche sociologique sur les grands-mères haitiennes de Montréal qu'elle a écrit ce premier roman, hommage aux « survivantes ... » de son pays d'origine. Dans une langue sobre et accessible, l'auteure met en scène quatre générations de femmes, qui, avec la même passion déterminée, souhaitent « pour nos enfants une part de ce que la vie nous avait refusé... ».

Sa mère étant morte à sa naissance, Marianne est recueillie par sa grand-mère Aida qui lui transmet ses valeurs: fierté, honnêteté, courage, indépendance. La fillette retient les leçons et quand, à 17 ans, elle met ou monde une fille—dont le père s'est éclipsé—elle décidera de l'élever seule en s'esquintant sur une vieille machine à coudre Singer pour lui payer des études. Giselle quittera Anse-aux-Mombins pour « ... la vie qui se vit ailleurs ... ».

Pendant vingt ans, les trois femmes vont vivre ensemble, à Montréal, où Marianna, tout en s'adaptant tant bien que mal à l'hiver trop long, au métro qui l'effraie, au café qui ne goûte rien, à l'autorité familiale relâchée, va créer un lien précieux avec sa petite-fille à qui elle lègue l'héritage de son aïeule Aida.

« J'écrirai ton histoire, elle ne finira jamais, elle sera éternelle, belle et éternelle », promet Sara à Marianna, quand cette dernière repartira dans son pays «retrouver ce parfum de campagne ... cette odeur de canne brûlée ... » et, sur la galerie de sa vieille maison, attendre Sara.

A SOCIAL HISTORY OF WET NURSING IN AMERICA: FROM BREAST TO BOTTLE

Janet Golden. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

BY KRISTA SCOTT

The role and function of the female breast has been a subject of intense discussion and fantasy in western history, since stories of the breast are entwined with debates about mothering, sexuality, and the place of women. Carolus Linnaeus, the eighteenth-century originator of modern zoological nomenclature, decided that

he would categorize a particular group of animals by a biological characteristic "active" in only one sex and for only a brief period of time: mammae, or breasts. That he chose to make such a characteristic the identifying feature of an animal group which includes humans is noteworthy for the political and social agenda it promoted, since Linnaeus was a proponent of the abolition of the institution of wet nursing.

From this example we can see that wet nursing is implicated in a number of intersecting discourses, as Janet Golden notes in *A Social History of Wet Nursing in America*. Golden draws together historical, social, political, economic, and medical threads to weave a complex chronicle of the practice of wet nursing from the colonial period to the early twentieth century. She begins by describing wet nursing activities in colonial and antebellum America, noting how necessity and geography shaped wet nurses' experiences, and how religious directives (influenced, ironically, by European Enlightenment-era secular theorists such as Linnaeus) warned against the decadence of upper-class women who did not suckle their own children. The nineteenth century saw the growing institutionalization of the medical profession and the consequent intervention by physicians into the practice of infant care, as well as the increasing commodification of wet nursing and milk. The early twentieth century, where Golden leaves off, marked the large-scale termination of the wet nursing profession in favour of bottled breast milk.

On one level Golden's book may be read as a historical account of the practice of wet nursing in America, a subject which has been documented only marginally compared to European experiences. It is tempting to view the history of wet nursing as a single linear progression from a pleasantly bucolic colonial occupation to a fully medicalized and commodified practice. However, Golden does not make this mistake. She is careful to note discrepancies, tensions, and regional dynamics. For instance, she does not argue that wet nursing was gradually eliminated because it was less efficient or sophisticated than artificial feeding with formula; instead she links the demise of wet nursing to the tumultuous interaction of increasingly institutionalized medical science, class divisions, discourses of childrearing and proper motherhood, individual family experiences, infant mortality, and so forth. In addition, Golden does not cast families and wet nurses as passive victims of institutional forces; rather, she shows how both were active agents who often resisted or ignored the dictates of physicians and popular childrearing literature.

Golden carefully notes the limitations of her sources; since wet nursing tended to be a private, often informal, or non-institutional service, there are few official records. Thus much of her analysis is restricted to more urbanized centres where, for example, archives of newspaper advertisements by and for wet nurses might be found, or where ledgers of poorhouses and homes for single mothers might have documented women being contracted out.

On another level, Golden's history is a lens through which larger issues may be brought into focus. She critically examines the dynamics of race, noting the regional differences between North and South in employing white working-class, free black, or slave wet nurses (which led to much scientific debate in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries over whether or not "hereditary" characteristics could be transmitted through milk). She points out the class divisions in negotiating the "proper" place for the wet nurse in the private upper- or middle-class home, and she traces the relationship of urban development to wet nursing practices.

Golden's work is useful not just for feminists concerned with historical study but also for present discourses around mothering. Her analytic model is effective precisely because its meshing of material practice and theoretical relationships is applicable to our present struggles. She explicitly indicates the ideological link between mothering style and class demarcations in North American society, as well as the power relations inherent in defining proper motherhood and childrearing practices. As Golden concludes, though the wet nurse has disappeared, the "enduring cultural resonance of actions performed in the nursery" has not.

WITHOUT CHILD: CHALLENGING THE STIGMA OF CHILDLESSNESS

Laurie Lisle. New York: Ballantine Books, 1997.

BY MARIA BONANNO

As feminists have discovered, language is not neutral; its bias is inherent in the structure and vocabulary. Laurie Lisle chooses the vocabulary of nonmotherhood as her starting point, noting that "the existing vocabulary is unrelentingly negative, descending from a mythological or distant past when being childless was rare, inadvertent, and most often unlucky." Our language, therefore, reflects the fact that motherhood is considered normal and nonmotherhood is "other."

Anyone who marches to the beat of an "other" drummer will tell you that they are generally called upon to explain themselves. Lisle begins this task by examining the possible motivations of nonmotherhood. She examines a number of psychological, social, and psychoanalytical perspectives on childlessness, but the overriding evidence seems to support the theory that there are no consistent "explanations" or psycho-social "problems" that lead to nonmotherhood. It is simply an independent choice made by each unique person for varying reasons.

However, throughout history nonmothers have consistently felt the sting from the accusation of selfish-