

their feelings: they "believe that when they *understand* how another feels, they have no right to have feelings of their own." Their feelings are also distorted and repressed — for example, in order to maintain a self image of a kind, loving person when they inwardly resent the alcoholic, they will distort their feelings of anger into self-righteousness.

Co-dependents tend to be gullible, to believe almost anything they are told, even if it is an obvious lie, the most obvious one the belief that the alcoholic will give up drinking and things will change. Spiritual deterioration is the result of another characteristic, loss of morality, which can include neglect of ourselves and others, such as our children, through our disease. Dishonesty, another major factor in addiction and co-dependence, can be found in many of these characteristics.

When Schaefer sets co-dependence in its

cultural context, she is discussing a society that accepts the abnormal as normal because it is so common. "When we talk about the addictive process, we are talking about civilization as we know it." For example, "an addictive relationship is considered normal in our culture. Most of our love songs are about addictive love and are based on its assumptions — suffering, possessiveness, cling-clung relationships, and externalizing our identity."

Four characteristics — frozen feelings, perfectionism, dishonesty, and thinking disorders — are related to their cultural context, showing how the family, the school, and the church support them. Our society actually provides "cultural co-dependence training."

Finally, Schaefer discusses treatment of co-dependence in the past and present, weaknesses and strengths of various approaches, new treatment models, and nine treatment issues to be addressed. This

includes the need of treatment staff "to recognize that working in this field is a constant invitation to indulge in their disease" and the Twelve Step program — such as Alcoholics Anonymous — as a crucial tool for making a systems shift from the addictive system to a "living process" system. She herself has developed a new therapy, living process therapy, that encompasses these issues.

The book is not as well organized as it might be, and tends to be repetitious. But these complaints are minor compared to the impact this powerful book had on me. As a person recovering from several addictions (primarily an eating disorder), I became involved with a classic addictive personality. Throughout this relationship, my eating disorder seemed to be in remission. Not until I had lost everything I owned and was about to lose my mind, did I realize that I had simply switched addictions. When I discovered this book, I no longer felt alone.

## WHAT DID I DO WRONG? MOTHERS, CHILDREN AND GUILT

Lynn Caine. New York: Arbor House, 1985.

### *Kitty Lundy*

As a mother, I could identify with a lot of the anguish, self doubt, guilt and sheer fury that Caine describes experiencing herself. If the book is meant to reassure well-intentioned upper middle class mothers that they are doing the best they can in the circumstances, and that in most cases their kids will eventually turn out alright, then Caine achieves her objective.

As an analysis of the maternal role, *What Did I Do Wrong?* falls short. Caine generalizes about societal and self perceptions of mothers at various points in history without providing explanations in an historical context. She notes that for a long time American mothers occupied a hallowed place, but this was gradually eroded by accusations of over-protectiveness, 'supermomism' and the loading of children with guilt — "after all I have done for you." All true, but we do want some idea how this came about.

The generation of women who came of age during the World War II period had been the most highly-educated ever. Many women had come to like well-paid work and the excitement of competition in their war jobs. See, for example, the movie "The Life and Times of Rosie the

Riveter." Following the return of the veterans at the end of the war, women were pushed back into the home. With the explosive growth of suburbs, 'home' for many meant isolation from all but other housewives and mothers. The only area in which these women could excel was in producing 'super kids.' If children could not attain such super standards, mothers were guilt-stricken, and some made their children feel inadequate too. Generally, fathers experienced less guilt at their children's real or perceived failures, because their arena of striving for status was the workplace.

Now in the 1970s and 1980s, spurred by economic necessity and by the Women's Movement, most mothers work outside the home. Nonetheless, they continue to carry most of the responsibility for childcare and, in the case of single mothers, total responsibility. If something goes wrong with the children, mothers are the first to be blamed.

By using her own case to illustrate both problems that many mothers face, and ways of coping with them, Caine limits applicability to women who occupy socioeconomic positions that are similar to her own. The great majority of parents with temporarily or permanently wayward children lacks the financial resources to move their children in and out of private schools until they find the right one to meet their needs. Moreover, most people do not see themselves as having such options, even if they were affordable.

Although Caine does make reference to

working class women, for instance in describing her encounter with the mutual support group called 'women without stationwagons,' her book is geared to middle and upper middle class women.

Caine's discussion of experts' views on how mothers influence their children's development has the same ahistoric quality mentioned before. The pendulum has swung from biological determinism to the *tabula rasa* of environmental determinism, and back to positions in the middle. On each swing there were experts affirming a particular stance as the only valid one.

Caine argues that experts really cannot account for individual outcomes, but often are quick to blame mothers for their children's problems without taking into account many other influences. It seems to me that Caine has set up a straw adversary. Leaving aside the question of what constitutes an expert, it is hard to believe that experts would assign mothers sole responsibility for the way their children turn out.

How a mother feels about her children and how she acts towards them will surely affect the children. That most mothers do their best and should not blame themselves for shortfalls, or allow others to blame them, is a separate issue. In Caine's book the separation is blurred.

It would have been easier to evaluate Caine's book if she had set out her objectives. It is unclear whether the book is a case history *cum* advice column, or whether it is an attempt to analyze mothers' roles. In my view, the book does not

provide such an analysis, and does not contribute to the knowledge base of feminist studies.

However, the book has practical merits. First, there is value in Caine's en-

couraging mothers to use support groups to share doubts and feelings of inadequacy and insecurity. Second, she makes the important point that Supermom is about as real as TV's Superman, and that

it is time women stopped flagellating themselves for not achieving the impossible.

## NO KIDDING: INSIDE THE WORLD OF TEENAGE GIRLS

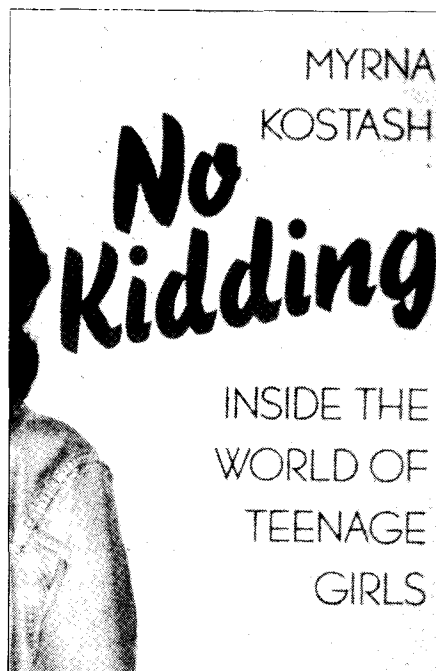
Myrna Kostash. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1987.

*Barbara Warme*

It all comes tumbling out in a cascade of confessions, diary excerpts, 60s flashbacks, statistics, sociological speculations, philosophical musings, girlish gossip, and four-letter words — an unusual mix, but it works. To answer the middle-aged question, "What is the world coming to?" Myrna Kostash gathered newspaper clippings, read the literature on adolescence, talked with youth workers and school officials, and haunted adolescent habitats. The core of *No Kidding*, however, comes from the long, intense conversations she had with approximately fifty girls in Edmonton, Vancouver and Toronto, and it is their voices which give the lie to the romantic view of adolescence as a psycho-social moratorium afforded by an affluent, industrialized society. This is not moratorium: coming of age in Canada, it would seem, is grim work for most young females.

Affectionately drawn portraits of twelve girls from diverse backgrounds are interspersed with 'theme chapters' in which Kostash examines the contexts which shape the lives of her subjects: schools, jobs, families, leisure subcultures and, more broadly, 'the system' which both creates, and attempts ineffectually to patch up, adolescent problems. Not surprisingly, she has discovered not one teenage world, but many, and they mirror the unbudging class and ethnic divisions of the wider society. The sisterhood of the young, no less than that of adult women, is extended to one's own kind, while the 'free spirits' exercise their lonely freedom for remote causes like peace and anti-apartheid, causes which keep them undernourished and isolated from their peers.

Kostash makes it clear that sexual innocence was not buried, at the end of the fifties, with the brush rollers, the girdles, and the white gloves. Although sexual activity now begins earlier, stringent codes of conduct still inhibit the early use of contraceptives. ("Later, maybe, you



can pick up the pill; if you're lucky, you can get it without an internal exam and a whole bunch of questions about your personal life, you can hide it without your mother finding it, and you can take it without your boyfriend freaking out: 'Hey, what kind of a girl are you, anyway?') The double standard has been only slightly refashioned, dictating that while boys, of course, 'do it' out of lust, nice girls do it only out of love. The risks of love — sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, abortion or single parenthood — are not to be coolly calculated. In any case, are these girls in a position to make calculations, if their information/misinformation is derived largely from friends, from Harlequins, and from pornography? Kostash deplores the withholding of sex education from teenagers as a form of "generational sadism" in a consumer culture that flaunts sexual liberation.

It is not just for the failure to provide sex education that schools stand accused. Kostash finds little evidence that, for all the rhetoric, they are re-directing female students in any substantial way. Middle-class schools, while encouraging scholastic achievement among girls, still send out signals that the proper areas of study are the humanities and social sciences ("girls are interested in people, not things") as preparation for an 'enriched' but traditional family role. Schools with working-

class populations confine vocational preparation to the lower-level skills, and unambitiously measure institutional success in terms of drop-out rates and the capacity to maintain discipline. Kostash's discussion of unemployment and the ghettoized job scene makes one wonder: does graduation make much difference?

To anyone knowledgeable about subjects such as the labour force participation of women, drug abuse among the young, sex-role stereotyping, family violence, etc., *No Kidding* will bring few surprises. Academic knowledge, however, ill prepares the reader for the shock of hearing research findings confirmed — rarely challenged — in the riveting words of the girls themselves. Feminists will find fuel, but little comfort, in their stories. Comfort, if it is to be found at all, perhaps can be drawn from their attitudes. There is indignation here, a deep sense of unfairness, and a resolve to make things different. Independence? It is seen as a given, but what does it mean?

*Grown up, girls will be working for a living, will be heads of families. But this seems hardly to be liberating. The single woman, treading the circuit between office, singles bar, and bachelor apartment, is seen as merely lonely. The career woman, bereft of networks, vulnerable to harassment and exploitation, under hostile or skeptical male surveillance, is seen as profoundly on her own. The superwoman, managing career and family life, is all too often burned-out, exhausted, at the end of her tether.*

Yet, most of Kostash's young women welcome the inevitability of some kind of independence, and premise their dreams on having it.

What explains their bedrock optimism? For most, the gulf between where they are and where they want to be is daunting, but they do not seem daunted. The obstacles to their succeeding are depressing but, planning and scheming, they are not depressed. Kostash, though unabashedly fond of her teenagers, does not deceive herself or the reader about their probable futures. A fundamental restructuring of economic, social and political relationships must occur, she argues, before these achingly fine adolescent visions can be realized. But the book is not about restructuring. It is about dreams and nightmares and dogged persistence.