

the government agents could deny annuities to any native person who defied the laws against second marriages, a policy that harmed the well-being of the women and children.

As Carter attests, the rules and regulations were confusing for native people and the bureaucrats alike, and occasionally for this reviewer. Although some politicians and bureaucrats were more empathetic than others, taken as a whole, the arrogance and obtuseness of their decisions are breathtaking.

A well researched book, Carter's eye-opening study is important to understanding the legacies of government and church interference in the love lives of Aboriginal peoples.

*Barbara M. Freeman teaches media history and theory in the School of Journalism and Communication at Carleton University.*

## ENTER MOURNING

HEATHER MENZIES

*Douglas and McIntyre*

REVIEW BY BEVERLY SUEK

Why are we afraid to talk about death? Anyone who has experienced the lingering death of a parent, a good friend, a lover, knows how hard it is to express to others what you feel. Heather Menzies in *Enter Mourning* opens up an opportunity for us to be part of the journey of the last stage of the life of her mother—and the impact on her and her family—in a frank way that many of us hesitate to articulate.

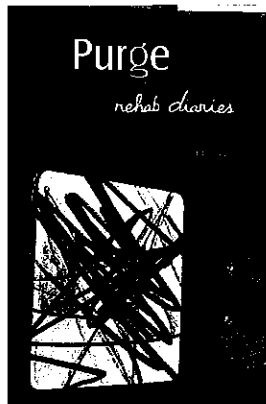
While that may sound overwhelmingly sad, it is not. The book unveils the feelings and emotions we experience when accompanying a loved one on the end stage of life. It is about love, self-discovery and growing up.

It is also about the unresolved issues that many women have with their mothers, and how important it is to understand those and to resolve them, or, at least, to get a perspective on learning to live with the differences.

The book combines personal experience with selected research on dying, which, although useful, interrupted the flow of the narrative. I found the switch from emotional to intellectual and back again to be disconcerting.

This, however, is outweighed by the merits of the book. Menzies' writing is both articulate and thought-provoking. She says it best when she talks about her role in her mother's dying journey and her personal learning:

"I feel as though I'm serving as a midwife here, soothing Mum's journey towards death and acting as her trusted navigator.... I am being born into a new sense of myself and my own aliveness: on the other side of the fear of death, on the other side of my insecurity, of my fear of living fully.... Certainly into a new level of maturity...."



## PURGE: REHAB DIARIES

NICOLE JOHNS

*Seal Press*

REVIEW BY MEGAN BUTCHER

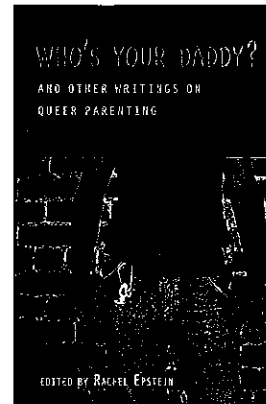
In the introduction to *Purge*, Nicole Johns clearly sets out its threefold purpose: "to inform the public, counteract the myths surrounding eating disorders and treatment, and provide eating-disordered individuals with hope." Though I have some doubt about the last point, she does admirably well on the first two.

Most of the book is excerpted from diary entries written when Johns was a 22-year-old in-patient at the Wisconsin Eating Disorders Clinic. The entries are interspersed with snippets from her medical chart. Johns details the chilling physical harm a nine-year eating disorder will wreak, as well as the mental anguish she and the other patients dealt with on a day-to-day basis.

Her diagnosis is caught between anorexia and bulimia. Still menstruating and not underweight, she is classified as EDNOS (Eating Disorder Not Otherwise Specified). She looks "normal," though she is patently not. In fact, her descriptions of regular behaviours spun out of control—like changing clothes 13 times a day, or restricting calories to 500 a day—are one of the strengths of the book. As she writes, "our bodies have borne witness to our madness, and they will never let us forget."

There is some hope in this book: Johns survives, does not become a repeat offender at the eating disorder clinic, and publishes a blunt, moving book. But the hope that Johns embodies has its counterpoint in her friend Holly, who is on her deathbed as the book ends. Though hopeful it is not, it makes for a very strong narrative.

Johns is able to ride a difficult and fine line in memoir writing: She ably documents the deep self-loathing she experiences and the behaviour it engenders without ever pulling pity from the reader. The writing is pared-



down and clear-eyed. With passages like "I will also bear witness to slender teenage girls stepping on the scale and berating themselves. I will want to tape a note to the scale that says 'Don't do it,'" she breaks your heart without ever playing it.

## WHO'S YOUR DADDY: AND OTHER WRITINGS ON QUEER PARENTING

EDITED BY RACHEL EPSTEIN

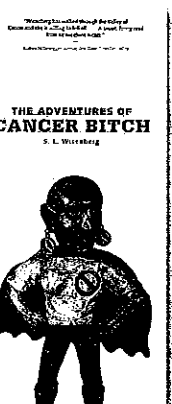
*Sumach Press*

REVIEW BY DEBRA PARKES

While in law school in the mid-1990s, I studied contemporary cases involving mothers denied custody of their children because they were lesbians. Fast-forward just over a decade and I, a non-birth mother who was not forced to go through an adoption process, am listed as one of my daughter's two parents on her birth certificate. Queer parents of today owe much to the women, men and children whose families were vilified, torn apart and, for some, eventually given a hard-won stamp of approval by courts and legislatures.

This collection of essays is significant for the way it allows queer parents and their children to move beyond the limiting posture of defensiveness ("our families are just the same as" or "just as good as" an ideologically based conception of heterosexual nuclear families) to a more liberating place of exploration and constructive engagement.

*Who's Your Daddy* includes 36 chapters, an introduction and a wealth of information about resources, groups and activism around queer parenting. The essays and interviews cross generations, continents and perspectives. They raise uncomfortable questions. For example, Suzanne Pelka's research shows that the familiar refrain "love [not blood] makes a family" does not tell the whole story for many lesbian mothers who, in fact, have complex and contradictory attitudes toward



*Continued page 42*