

expression that "is thought more *becoming*" (xviii), in the sense both of attractive in her person and appropriate to her role. Moreover, *Becoming Victoria* might be titled *Constructing Victoria*, for Vallone concentrates on how Victoria was shaped to fill a role that was unprecedented in British history. From her babyhood, it was understood that Victoria was heir presumptive to the throne of England, but that this monarch would be constrained not only by the country's, but also by her own, female, constitution, not to mention the demands and expectations of the public. Vallone shows us the efforts of Victoria's widowed mother, the Duchess of Kent, to educate her daughter to be both woman and sovereign when "womanhood" meant an absence of sovereignty, and to maintain both individual privacy and public visibility for the young Victoria. These efforts provoked considerable conflict with the aging king and alienated her daughter as well. Vallone shows us also how the princess's life was reconstructed and represented to young readers in biographies which reinforced the mutual "belonging" of sovereign and subject, and, curiously, given the discrepancy between monarch and subject, prescribed the Queen's own girlhood as a pattern for the many.

Vallone is nonetheless right to insist on *Becoming Victoria*, for throughout the book she succeeds in her goal of giving voice to the young Victoria. Although her journals and letters were never private, Vallone enables us to see Victoria exploring her choices, as she resists some influences (her mother's) and embraces others (her governess and her Uncle Leopold), and as she writes stories which interrogate the values of the stories they appear to imitate. Her enthusiasms - italics and exclamation marks and all - for the theatre and opera, chiefly, but for other events such as her relatives' visits, burst through the constraints of her upbringing and counteract the prickliness of her mature portraits with the becoming freshness of England's rose.

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The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony. Leigh Gilmore. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001; x +163 pages; ISBN: 0-8014-8674-2; \$16.96US (paper).

My initial interest in reading Leigh Gilmore's *The Limits of Autobiography* was more than met by the care and thoughtfulness of her arguments regarding "the complexity of representing the self in the context of representing trauma." Informed by both feminist and poststructuralist projects, Gilmore's text is an important contribution to efforts to reach and theorize beyond the impasse between second-wave feminist insistence on "breaking the silence" to claim "the voice of experience," and poststructuralist critiques of these foundational terms. Working with a notion of the "productivity of the limit," Gilmore reads texts by Dorothy Allison, Mikal Gilmore, Jamaica Kincaid and Jeanette Winterson as "limit cases" - that is, texts that "reveal and test the limits of autobiography" when what is being represented is trauma.

Before engaging close readings of texts by each of these authors, Gilmore situates her insights in a broader theorization of autobiography, trauma, memory and representation. At the crux of her concern in these first two chapters is how the established conventions of autobiography constrain self-representations of trauma through reliance on what she identifies as "almost legalistic" claims of verifiable evidence and demonstrable truth. As Gilmore argues, such conventions risk inviting shaming or silencing judgements that may be "too similar to forms in which trauma was experienced." She continues, "[i]n this scenario, the autobiographical project may swerve from the form of autobiography even as it embraces the project of self-representation." It is precisely, then, toward texts that have swerved from the conventional form of autobiography that Gilmore turns to learn from and theorize how trauma marks texts of self-representation, and how practices of self-representation are marked by trauma.

Beginning with a reading of Allison's *Bastard Out of Carolina* (1992), Gilmore explores how Allison pushes against the limit between "autobiography" and "fiction" to tell a story of incest and illegitimacy beyond the reach of the

violence of law. Deepening these insights, Gilmore then turns to *Shot in the Heart* (1994), in which Mikal Gilmore creates a narrative that grapples with how to tell "his" story when that story is intimately caught up with the story of Gary Gilmore (Mikal's brother), who was executed in Utah in the summer of 1977 for murdering two young men. Her narrative is further caught up with larger familial and cultural stories of secrets, lies and violence. Of all of the chapters in this text, I found this one to be the most provocative and insightful. Not previously familiar with *Shot in the Heart*, I found Gilmore's reading to be persuasive and exciting, so much so that I am eager to read the original text.

The following chapter engages Kincaid's *Annie John* (1986) and *Lucy* (1990) to deliberate on a complex and nuanced form of self-representation that not only offers autobiography as a "repeated" (rather than one-time) text, but one that can also be told from a child's perspective. Gilmore concludes her substantive analyses with a reading of Winterson's *Written on the Body* (1992), a text of love, illness, loss, and grief, in which the "I" who writes is marked neither by gender, sexuality nor name - in this sense, a text at far distance from the conventions of autobiography.

Gilmore's arguments in each of these chapters are compelling and often insightful; as she draws from other conceptual work, she is splendid in her cogent and concise explanations and in her use of those conceptualizations to deepen her readings of the self-representational texts. Across the essays, Gilmore makes a strong and important argument for studying representations of trauma: for how they challenge conventional representational practices, but more than that - for what they might teach us about the need to look again at those conventions and to take seriously the violence of their limits in the constitution of the self living in relation to histories of suffering and injury.

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Beyond Coping: Widows Reinventing Their Lives. An Anthology of Stories Collected by Molly Hurd and Margie Macdonald. Lockeport, Nova Scotia: Community Books, 2001; photos; 143 pages; ISBN 1-896496-25-3; \$18.95 (paper).

Beyond Coping is a collection of the stories of twenty Canadian widows. Hurd and Macdonald lost their husbands in 1996 in a water accident off the coast of Nova Scotia; they were/are young widows and the creation of this book is part of the process by which they re-invented their lives after unexpected widowhood.

Each woman tells her own story in her own way; yet each tells of both (inevitable) pain and personal development. No story is boring to the reader. Together, these narratives are inspirational; they portray "ordinary" women who, after bereavement, go on to do things that they likely would not have undertaken when they were wives (or still were wives), and who, perhaps more significantly, gain new understandings of self. The women are realistic role models; their diverse accomplishments as widows are neither proverbial nor unattainable.

The intended audience for *Beyond Coping* seems mostly to be (other) widows. The Appendix contains "guidelines and inspirations" for widows to write their own story (written by Gwen Davies, with input from Hurd and Macdonald). Yet I think all women will find this book interesting and useful since it speaks to more general issues in women's lives and illustrates women's resilience and strength. It is difficult to do a usual (academic) analysis and evaluation of this book, and perhaps is not fair to try. However, I have a few points to make along these lines. The twenty women are not a random sample. They were "found" through widow support/bereavement groups across Canada, notices placed in major newspapers, local medial coverage in Nova Scotia, and through personal contacts. We are not told how many widows were approached but declined to write their story. As a result, the women are not necessarily representative of Canadian widows. They are all English-speaking and fairly well-educated. Many were widowed at much younger ages than is usually the case (although this is a good reminder that statistical probability is only