



Home/Birth: A Poemic

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A lyric essay & total collaboration of extraordinary & shocking beauty, this hybrid text troubles the waters of genre, gender, motherhood, and the politics & poetics of birthing. An exacting and honest conversation between two of our most interesting writers and our most dedicated activists.

Home/Birth: A Poemic Details

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From Reader Review Home/Birth: A Poemic for online ebook

Laura says

"Sometimes I feel this responsibility to be very normal so that people I'll not think that only freaks can have homebir5hs." - pm. 187

Beautiful. Poignant. Emotional. Love every page.

Khadijah says

Wrenching and skilled collaborative work. A must-read.

Summer Thorp-lancaster says

I loved this book. Raw, juicy and true. It was like reading some of the many conversations I've had with my best friend over the years. I deeply appreciate the inclusion of Day's stillbirth, although I imagine it was horrifyingly difficult to write/include.

Vanessa says

This book really touched me. It has a lot of really important information about home birth, but also reads like a poem and personal essay. The correspondence between the two authors who wrote it together through email with much distance between them is so powerful and makes this book feel different than any other "birthy" book I've ever read.

Lisa M. says

I saw Greenburg and Zucker read at the 2011 AWP. It was at a workshop that considered the idea of poetic collaboration. Honestly, I remember the other performances more. But the reading inspired me enough to buy this book, which was popular with the literary crowds that year. I attempted reading this shortly after I got home, but I was too busy with my thesis and personal life to get into it. This book is not for people who have issues with control. Originally, I had difficult reading this. This book mainly focuses on the experiences two women have with birth. The two women are not identified throughout the poemic, so at times we cannot tell who is speaking if we do not have identifying details (ie, other characters names, number of children, etc.) If one can let go of these issues while reading it, one will discover that this was an ingenious way of approaching the topic of birth. Greenburg and Zucker strive to discuss birth as a nationwide issue. By using speakers who are not identified by specific names, and at times are easy to confuse, it projects the idea that these two voices are in fact, one. That although each woman who births her own specific story, women struggle as a group when making birth decisions. I also really enjoyed the "choral" elements of the book. Found texts are also woven throughout and used very effectively. Certain lines reappear and were used to project the largeness and universality of the topic. This was the only lyrical part of the poemic for me,

though. The language is not very floral, and it is not very appealing in any other stylistic sense. The traditional poems that feature between passages were actually very bad. I would never pick up either of these poets' books, outside of this forceful one.

Despite the lack of technical talent, the book was still necessary. Although it is by no means famous, it was popular that year in the literary world. It was used to open women's eyes to what I would consider a very important feminist issue. I have never seriously considered giving birth, so it has never been a topic of large interest to me. It is obviously a feminist topic in that, women give birth. What concerns women concerns the feminist. This book really opened my eyes to the birthing industry, and how it expects women's bodies to act on scheduled timing (what a surprise,) at it's convenience, and expects to profit from it. This book claims that a child is profit enough. Although many facts were at times exaggerated, it opened my eyes to a lot of things.

There were also a few class and race issues throughout, but not as many as I expected.

This is a good book. Birth effects us all because we are all born. Everyone should read this.

Matthew Salesses says

Would be useful if you are thinking about a home birth.

Sarah says

I read this book in two days. If I didn't already have a toddler, it would have been one. Lots of good stuff about the fucked up maternity care system in America. Good arguments for home birth and doulas and midwives. Scary statistics about c-sections and unnecessary interventions. It was like reading a conversation about The Business of Being Born.

And holy cow did I cry at the end. Spoiler alert! The Maine home birth ends in stillbirth. Not the thing to read while pregnant and hormonal. And I like these women. No one wants to read about a stillbirth. Too fucking sad.

But was it a "poemic"? No. Was it poetic? No. Was it really filled with rage? No. The italicized sections in verse (I'm not sure I want to call them poems, but they had line breaks, so I can legitimately call them verse) were BAD. Like, BAD BAD BAD. I can't believe they were allowed to stay in the book.

Arielle Greenberg edited Gurlisque, which I adored, and I wish this book had more of the gurlisque aesthetic. Which is to say, I wish it had more of the grotesque and the girly and the surreal, and not just crap about being "witchy" and the purity of birth and how empowering it is. Whatever. And I am very sympathetic to this argument.

So, as non-fiction: probably four or five stars. As poetry, it was a stinker.

Still, if you are uninitiated in the world of birth politics and feminist takes on maternity care, this would be an excellent place to get your feet wet.

Patricia says

The advocacy in this book is powerful because the imagery is vivid and honest. Because Zucker and Greenberg are poets, they know how to make words paint a vivid picture and they never shy away from telling the truth as they know it. I can't imagine any women of childbearing age, reading this book and not recognizing the home birth is the best option.

My guess is that I'm the same age as their mothers and they are the age of my daughter and daughters-in-law so I've witnessed the much of the historical arc of birth practices that they describe. My first two births took place in the hospital--the first was an accidental "natural birth" because the doctor was late getting there and my husband intuitively served as a skillful birth coach. The ecstasy of this delivery led me to demand no interventions on the second birth which was also a hospital birth and so fast the doctor walked in just in time to catch the baby. My third delivery was a second trimester miscarriage at home with a midwife. My fourth birth was in our family physician's office--his halfway step between home and hospital. Seven of my 14 grandkids were born at home and 4 in birth centers without intervention. My daughter-in-law is a midwife.

But Home/Birth opened my eyes wider and convinced me that I need to be a vocal advocate of homebirth as opposed to merely quietly rejoicing that this is the frequent choice in my family. This is a must read for women of all ages as we need to work together to take back this joyous experience.

Literary Mama says

Home/Birth, affirms a birthing woman's individual knowing, and the right to birth where she feels safest and most empowered. Arielle Greenberg and Rachel Zucker are friends, established poets, and mothers with a variety of birthing experience. Home/Birth is a call and response that weaves together threads of conversation: birth stories (their own and others); legalities and politics; bumper stickers and slogans; humor; sadness; anger; and joy.

Read Literary Mama's full review of Home/Birth here: <http://www.literarymama.com/blog/arch...>

Katelyn Lucy says

As a midwife and a homebirth mama myself, I know how deeply important birth is to mom's, babies, families. Though I respect the telling of their stories by these poets/writers/mamas, the book does not acknowledge that homebirth is, for many women, an educational and financial privilege, and that idealization of homebirth, oversimplification of the politics of birth and judgement of choice of birthplace/medications/provider/etc. does not further their cause or promote the normalization of homebirth. Safe homebirth with well-established hospital transport if needed should be an option for all women. I wish this book could have painted more complex perspectives on these issues.

Megan says

Amazing...I put this book down stunned by the presence and vulnerability of these two authors in this text.

Margaret Adams says

This book read like a transcript of a conversation between two women--prose-poems of late-night emails back and forth, maybe, but with the to's and from's and date-stamp's deleted. I loved it for the structure of the writing as much as for the content. You don't necessarily have to be a birth junkie AND an unusual-narrative-structure junkie to love this book, but you probably ought to be one or the other.

Mia says

I have many thoughts about this book, most of which I just want to tell to one particular friend. I loved reading it. It's momentous! I found the telling of the homebirth of Day, a stillborn child, to be profoundly moving, and deeply encouraging. What solace and wisdom and (somehow!) goodness, there. There is a need for a movement toward dying at home, of course. Hospice began that return.

Other thoughts, which I will ask said friend, will be about these things: Do true radicals call themselves radicals? What's with the trend (cf. David Shields, Reality Hunger) of not citing sources, or citing them as a group w/out particular attribution? (Though they did repeatedly cite "Pushed"). If the vision is to be as holistic and non-interventive and natural from beginning to end (both authors even mention using Fertility Awareness Methods for birth control), then how do they account for their asides about, say, IVF, and testing for diseases prior to the child's birth? How does my story (bookgroup talk alert!) of giving birth without interventions, unhooked from machines, with a doula, in the dark, kneeling, but at a hospital--which was the place where I wanted to be--fit into their strongly anti-hospital view? Might there be a more generous accounting for the fact (it does seem to be a fact) that some women genuinely have a harder time giving birth than others, for all sorts of reasons and none? (I summarized the argument to another friend, who replied, of her birth: "I think I would have died [had it been at home].") Might there be an honest grappling with the way that pride sneaks into these conversations, and even shame? What sorts of arguments can be soundly made from one's own experience as the start and end point? And what about the sort of off-hand mentioning of rape culture as of a piece with present birthing practices? I think such an argument must either be made in full, or not at all. It struck me as hyperbolic.

I found this book to be more polemic than poem, but no matter.

I love the doula's refrain that one must hold the space. And, yes, I agree: Ina May Gaskin is a visionary, and more doctors and midwives should be trained in breech births, and the vaginal birth of twins, &c. And yes, agreed: birth is wild, and wondrous, and transformative, and wild, and holy too. I'm glad they're writing about it.

I do think hospice is a good model, as they are a way, not an orthodoxy. (How often orthodoxies tilt toward fundamentalism). One can bring the teachings of hospice into a home, a hospital, and so forth. Okay. Done!

missy jean says

This "poemic" is cerebral and visceral, painful and beautiful, triggering and illuminating. Kind of like birth.

Melissa says

I loved this book. As soon as I got it from the library, I started reading it and didn't put it down for a couple of hours, reading almost all of it, skipping to the end, crying a little. It's really an incredible document of an honest, powerful, beautiful conversation between these two women. I've read over half a dozen books about birth, and none like this. My only critique is that some of the lyric poem fragments separating the sections just aren't that good.

I could excerpt from anywhere really, so here's one:

"Sometimes I think I can't bear it. Not the labor but the stories about bad births.

It was apparently common hospital practice in the 50s and 60s to bind women's breasts like this, sometimes immediately after birth.

Stay safe, stay home: that's what I'd print on a bumper sticker.

After our birth, you made me a grilled cheese sandwich and it was the best thing I'd ever eaten. It was like for a minute I had a perfect mother and she had made me a sandwich.

Christine Northrup, the famous OBGYN, said at a birthing conference, "For well-nourished women, the safest place is home."

Wouldn't it be fun to go to a birthing conference together? The way other women friends go to a spa?

Enraged. Why isn't every woman absolutely enraged?

In addition to the needle, I am really scared of the idea of forceps.

These things have a place. Some women need them. It's important to remember.

Ten to 20% of the time. It's important to remember the other eighty to ninety."

And:

"The most common response I got when I told people I was having a homebirth was, "But what about the baby?" Everyone thought I was putting the baby at risk in order to have some extreme experience for my own enjoyment or as a matter of pride or politics."

I don't even tell people. And this book makes me feel like I should. I'm grateful for that.
