



## **The Bitch in the House: 26 Women Tell the Truth About Sex, Solitude, Work, Motherhood, and Marriage**

*Cathi Hanauer (Editor) , Hope Edelman (Contributor) , Kate Christensen (Contributor) , Karen Karbo (Contributor) , Natalie Kusz (Contributor) , E.S. Maduro (Contributor) , Veronica Chambers (Contributor) , Jen Marshall (Contributor) , more... Sarah Miller (Contributor) , Kerry Herlihy (Contributor) , Catherine Newman (Contributor) , Hazel McClay (Contributor) , Pam Houston (Contributor) , Jill Bialosky (Contributor) , Cynthia Kling (Contributor) , Hannah Pine (Contributor) , Kristin van Ogtrop (Contributor) , Laurie Abraham (Contributor) , Susan Squire (Contributor) , Nancy Wartik (Contributor) , Ellen Gilchrist (Contributor) , Natalie Angier (Contributor) , Daphne Merkin (Contributor) , Elissa Schappell (Contributor) , Helen Schulman (Contributor) , Vivian Gornick (Contributor) , Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni (Contributor) ...less*

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Virginia Woolf introduced us to the “Angel in the House”, now prepare to meet... *The Bitch In the House*.

Women today have more choices than at any time in history, yet many smart, ambitious, contemporary women are finding themselves angry, dissatisfied, stressed out. Why are they dissatisfied? And what do they really want? These questions form the premise of this passionate, provocative, funny, searingly honest collection of original essays in which twenty-six women writers—ranging in age from twenty-four to sixty-five, single and childless or married with children or four times divorced—invite readers into their lives, minds, and bedrooms to talk about the choices they’ve made, what’s working, and what’s not.

With wit and humor, in prose as poetic and powerful as it is blunt and dead-on, these intriguing women offer details of their lives that they’ve never publicly revealed before, candidly sounding off on:

- The difficult decisions and compromises of living with lovers, marrying, staying single and having children
- The perpetual tug of war between love and work, family and career
- The struggle to simultaneously care for ailing parents and a young family
- The myth of co-parenting
- Dealing with helpless mates and needy toddlers
- The constrictions of traditional women’s roles as well as the clichés of feminism
- Anger at laid-back live-in lovers content to live off a hardworking woman’s checkbook

- Anger at being criticized for one's weight
- Anger directed at their mothers, right and wrong
- And—well—more anger...

“This book was born out of anger,” begins Cathi Hanauer, but the end result is an intimate sharing of experience that will move, amuse, and enlighten. *The Bitch in the House* is a perfect companion for your students as they plot a course through the many voices of modern feminism. This is the sound of the collective voice of successful women today—in all their anger, grace, and glory.

## **The Bitch in the House: 26 Women Tell the Truth About Sex, Solitude, Work, Motherhood, and Marriage Details**

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# **From Reader Review *The Bitch in the House: 26 Women Tell the Truth About Sex, Solitude, Work, Motherhood, and Marriage* for online ebook**

## **Tiffany says**

I read this book last year, and it has stayed with me all this time. Each essay a different woman's perspective on the types things woman are expected to do. I can so relate to many of the voices - why, for example, am I the only one in the relationship with an internal clock that tells me it's time to change the sheets or mop the floor? Reading this made me think about my struggles with being a wife on mother on a societal level. Fascinating read.

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## **Nancy D. says**

When you read a book of compiled essays, it's natural to connect with some more than others. *The Bitch in the House* is no exception, but worthy of a read and discussion? Absolutely.

Being only a female of my early twenties, I have yet to experience much of this book's content, such as marriage and childbirth. I will say, however, as a feminist of a younger generation, this book really did touch upon rapidly growing concerns of mine, such as gender and domestic roles. A few of the essays (most notably, the first by E.S. Maduro) really spoke to me, while others were, to be honest, a bit dull and uninspiring. But with 26 contributors who are surely quite different from one another (and, well, me!), you can't realistically expect to be enthralled by every single story.

I read at least one fellow Good Reads reviewer that said they were bothered by the fact that all of these women shared an occupation as some sort of literary professional. This didn't bother me, personally. Every one of them were completely passionate about the lives they lead outside of their romantic relationships or general domesticity. For them it is writing, but that could easily be replaced for us other women as something else. The point is, it is a difficult task to balance the two for many of us modern women, and I felt connected with them for that very reason, writer or not.

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## **Stasia says**

I wish I could give this book 2.5 stars, right in the middle. There were certainly some thought-provoking essays in it, essays that I might give to other people to read if I'd come across them on their own. However, the book in its entirety is a little hard to handle.

First of all, even though it's 26 different women, they all start to blur together. Mostly because the majority of them seem to be writers/editors/teachers who live in New York, do lots of yoga, have a fair amount of money, and, oddly enough, live in "brownstone" houses. It's crazy how many essays mentioned brownstones, a term I'd heard maybe once before in my life.

But the biggest thing was that I was hoping for some sort of empowering look at what it means to be a

woman in the world today, but it mostly ended up feeling like, yes, a bitchfest. Complaining about very first-world problems abounds. And it was very alienating for me: Hanauer (the editor) presented these essays like they're things that every woman goes through at some point, making me feel like because I'm not constantly upset about balancing children, housework, career, because I don't spend most of my time obsessing about why I am or am not happy in a relationship, I must not be a woman.

So yeah. Some of it was good, and it's a quick and sometimes entertaining read, but best taken in small doses.

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### **quinnster says**

Right off the bat I realized my mistake. I picked the audiobook (because it was available right away) instead of the actual book. There are just some people who are not cut out to read out loud and this book had a lot of them. Some were so bad even my husband who only heard a couple of minutes of one essay said 'What are you listening to? That is the worst thing I've ever heard!' because it was. I wanted to scream.

It didn't help that I couldn't relate to these women. These working women. These working women with flexible schedules. I didn't understand this anger towards their husband. This fighting and rage. My husband and I bicker, of course, but to fight? To be angry and resentful towards him? I don't have that and these women do.

I felt guilty for thinking of them as whiny, but all I thought about when I was listening to them reading was 'oh my god the whining.' Which I suppose is something I should feel guilty about, the unsupportiveness of those of my gender who 'want it all', but these women don't 'want it all'. They want perfection and they want it their way, without sacrifice or compromise. They want it all, but they want someone to give it to them. Sure they want to work for their reputations in their chosen careers, but everything else, they want those people to just give it to them and that's just annoying.

There were a couple of essays that I did enjoy, hence the 2 stars instead of just one, but pressed at this moment I couldn't tell you what those ones were about or why I liked them and that kind of says something too.

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### **Melissa says**

A bit upper middle class problem-y.

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### **Vicky says**

My biggest problem with this collection was that it seemed to me that I was reading the same story over and over again. I'd say about 90% of the contributors are upper-middle class, middle aged white women who are writers, live in New York City and do yoga. It also seemed to me that none of them really offered any advice or in some cases, a coherent story line. I got the feeling that a lot of them contributed just to get something off of their chests, no necessarily to offer help to any other women. I think I just expected too much from the book -- maybe that's all it was ever meant to be. There were some gems in here - "The Fat Lady Sings" and

"The Middle Way", to name a few - which is why it grudgingly gets 2 stars. But for the most part, I didn't come away with a whole lot from this collection.

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### **Meghan says**

Seriously!?! There are people out there that liked this book. I just wanted to scream at these women to get over themselves and do something about their lives. If you are that unhappy, do something about it!!! I couldn't relate at all. Sure maybe when I was 19 and stupid I experienced some of the bad boyfriend situations or felt lost, but I got over that.

Unless you want to be force-fed a bunch of poorly written stories about self-deprecating women, go ahead and read this. I'll go kiss my husband and remind myself that yes life could be bad, I could be one of them.

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### **Sara says**

My generation of women is the first to be stuck on the middle of "traditional" feminine roles and the new roles advocated by the feminist movement. Identifying as a feminist myself, and finding myself less than fulfilled in several "traditional" aspects of my marriage and life as a stepmother, I found myself relating to so much of the essays in this book.

Basically, our mom's were the last generation that were able to be at home and raise us. We learned, through observing them, that our fathers were to be obeyed, our fathers worked hard, and our mothers worked hard at home preparing three hot meals a day, doing laundry, and keeping a spotless house, and were often unfulfilled in doing this.

We grew up, got our own careers, and married men that were more "enlightened" about gender roles than our fathers. We expected them not only to vocalize feminine ideals, but to also automatically revert to them in life. This of course leads to profound disappointment, as they were also raised by the last generation of "homemakers" and they are just as happy to let us handle all the domestic chores, as their mothers did.

No WONDER we are all so angry, bitter, and feel disallusioned. It's not that our husbands won't pitch in if we ask them, but it's not their default setting. And instead of us being vocal and asking for what we need, we are still conditioned to "take over and just do it" because it's easier. Which of course leads to huge resentment, and tons of puzzled life-partners and husbands.

This is a fascinating volume about what it means to be a woman in our generation - how we balance all of our roles together, how we negotiate the motherly instincts that some of us have with our careers, why do we feel so ANGRY and resentful? I have found myself in this trap many times, and it was comforting to read some of these missives that I myself could have penned.

A few of these essays were just depressing - but the overall message is that we as women are able to forge our lives in the manner that we see fit - which is a luxury many of our mothers and grandmother's didn't have. And for that, they deserve our thanks. This one is going on the bookshelf to stay.

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## **Amber says**

The good: More women need to read more things like this. It's good to find that there are essays exploring the issues that keep us up at night, and it's good to know we're not the (only) crazy ones.

The bad: More women need to seek out actual therapy and counseling, or take other empowering steps, to change their lives for the better. Reading an essay about how life is hard doesn't make life any easier! Stop bitching and start treating yourself like to deserve to live well.

The ugly: I got this on loan, and gave my copy of *A Memory a Monologue a Rant and a Prayer* in exchange. I'll probably never see my book again, and it was vastly superior to this.

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## **DeAnna says**

I realize that my life (adjusted easily into marriage, had two even-tempered children, was happy to be a SAHM, etc.) wouldn't fit very well into this particular book of essays, but I couldn't help looking askance at some of the women represented in there. There were some interesting insights, but some of these women just seemed to make life harder for themselves than they needed to. Again, it may be that this book was by and for different people than the person that I am. Almost all of them were professional writers and/or editors, and a large majority were in therapy for multiple years, neither of which I have any experience with. There were a few essays where I found myself muttering, "Oh, get *over* yourself already!"

The essays were quite readable, some were very touching, and I would be interested in discussing the book with someone for whom it was more personally meaningful.

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## **Roxanne says**

Why is it that, when we come home at the end of a long day at work and our partner offers to cook dinner, we refuse and then stomp around the kitchen resentfully whipping up a fancy meal? Why do we get angrier and angrier as we wait for our partner to notice the pile of unwashed dishes instead of just asking him to help out? Where does this "irrational" behavior come from, and how do we deal with the problem of having it all--career, marriage, children--when having it all becomes too much?

A lot of these essays really made a lot of sense to me. I could have written an essay just like this. I especially liked:

- E.S. Maduro's "Excuse Me While I Explode"
- Kate Christiansen's "Killing the Puritan Within"
- Jill Bialosky's "How We Became Strangers"
- Helen Schulman's "My Mother's Ring"
- Kristin van Ogtrop's "Attila the Honey I'm Home"
- Elissa Schappell's "Crossing the Line in the Sand"

These essays spoke to me the most because, first of all, the authors' voices sounded most like me, and because the events they're describing are things I either recently went through or am soon to go through

(marriage, children): it was like a Preview of Coming Events in the sense that I could totally see myself being as angry and stressed as these women write about being. They're kind of terrifying essays in that way. But these women also write about joy, and about trying to work through the anger to appreciate the wonderful things in their lives and how lucky they are.

I also liked Vivian Gornick's piece on independence, which closes the book. Gornick, as an older and unmarried woman, reflects back on the life she's lived and the choices she's made. Here's a passage that particularly touched me:

*I am, simply, a person living a life partly that I chose and partly that chose me, a life that, though filled with friends and family and colleagues, is primarily one of solitude, one lived autonomously. And though this is far from ideal at all times--and though some days loneliness plagues me--for the most part, this is a life, **my** life, that I have come to embrace and appreciate. For how impossible it would have been to live it only fifty years ago! And what a privilege it has been to live it now.*

Overall, I highly recommend this book to all the smart women in my life, and I am also making F read the essays mentioned above.

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## **Stephanie says**

This book provokes a range of responses from readers. Some reviewers call it the "whining of women who have it all," which makes me wonder whether they actually read the book. If having it all means that one has a career, friends, family, and (if one chooses) a partner, then I guess many of us "have it all." I was not aware that if one "has it all" one must not reflect on life and love. The mood of this book was honest, contemplative, and funny. Although the writers do not hold back from expressing negative thoughts and emotions, their essays were far from bitter. If life were all sunshine and blue skies, there wouldn't be much to write about, would there? As a woman who recently married and is still trying to sort out what it means to share one's life and home with another person, I found this book to be a great companion.

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## **Lesley Guilmart says**

Honestly, I found it hard to sympathize with the women who contributed essays to this book. Could I identify with them? Kind of... I am a college-educated, middle-class white woman who will no doubt struggle with issues of motherhood and career. I just wish the editors had reached out to women who weren't writers and/or who weren't all middle to upper class. I felt like I was reading the same stories over and over...which I understand is kind of the point: we professional women all have similar struggles, yadda yadda. It's just that these women are so damn privileged! They make lots of money, hire nannies, live in New York City, get to write for a living. What about women who don't get to choose whether they work or stay home? I wonder how the writers would cope with their issues? Okay, the writers do have struggles: with feelings of guilt for not being there for their kids 24-7, or for feeling more peace and enjoyment at work than at home, or for craving a space independent of their spouse/partner/families. Again, all "problems" that come with privilege. Maybe they should look beyond their own situations and they'll find that they have it pretty darn good. One essay is enough; an entire book? Overkill.

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## **Karyl says**

I just couldn't do it anymore. I got halfway through this book and had to quit -- and I never quit books. I felt like most of these women are rather narcissistic and self-absorbed, and because they had to deal with someone else taking up space in their lives, they felt resentful. My marriage is by no means perfect (we just celebrated nine years this past week, though I'm surprised we've made it this long), but I realize that the only person that can make me happy is me. I married my husband, I chose him -- the good and the bad. I didn't feel like I gave up any of myself to marry my husband; instead our two half-selves came together into a better whole. Maybe that's because I was married at 22, a relatively young age, and I was too young to know better. But I believe I am better off being part of my marriage than being alone.

That said, marriage isn't for everyone, and I would never expect anyone to get married just because everyone else is. It's a personal choice, and I would never judge someone for choosing a different lifestyle from my own.

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## **Molly says**

Ugh. Unlike. I'll try to sum up why:

1) Every collection of stories from moms on the issue of working / not working is over-powered by the opinions of women who WRITE for a living. A job they don't have to do from an office. Where are the teachers? the attorneys? the saleswomen? the corporate workers? I get it, those moms don't write thoughtful essays on the "should I work or stay home" issue, writers write those. But I am so annoyed that publishers think this is a representative sample of working women.

2) The editor/writer of this one, Hanauer, needs to Get. Over. It. We choose our own happiness, people! If you are going to pile unrealistic expectations on yourself and your relationship, you will be unhappy, and perhaps, bitchy. And if you don't recognize you are unhappy/angry and try to fix it with self-reflection, therapy, better communication with spouse, you are just a whiner and I don't want to hear it. Don't blame society, lack of role models from our mothers, media, etc. Who cares! Buck up sister! Deal with your own house and your own relationships!

3) I had to put this down because it is in the toxic category of "fuel on the fire". As much as I believe my #2 above, I too, get angry at unfair roles. A book like this can get me on a rant and alienate me from my husband and kids. I'm better bitching for an hour and getting over it, rather than stewing in it with this book.

4) The first story, from the 26 year old author was pathetic. Boring to read and made me think - you are just getting started girl. You haven't earned the right to complain that life isn't what you expected. You aren't even 30.

And that is what I've been telling David since i put this book down. I might try to read one more entry and see if I'm more impressed. I usually don't feel this strongly about things... but this one pushed some button!

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