

The Other Mother: A Rememoir

Teresa Bruce

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Byrne springs to vivid life from the pages of this well-crafted biography.

In this inspiring dramatization of true events, a television journalist forms a bond of friendship with a modern-dance pioneer. Teresa Bruce demonstrates the importance of relying on a mentor, especially during times of stress. This absorbing cross between a traditional biography and a candid memoir places Byrne Miller in the limelight, alternating between the early years with her husband, writer Duncan Miller, and their final years as he combats Alzheimer's.

Juxtaposed are significant milestones in Teresa's life, allowing the reader to slip from a scene in the author's life directly into Byrne's as the chapters progress. Since the story is not told chronologically, the emphasis adheres to contrasts and the passage of time, casting an eerie glow on a story with an inevitable outcome. This is not to say the mood is negative rather than enlightening. Reality prevails, yet the underlying message is uplifting, not a somber progression of declining years.

Lyrical passages imbued with meaning add mystery to Byrne's character: "The sound of the wind came up before she recognized what it was: a soft fluttering and rustling of leaves on the oak tree's outermost reaches. It was enveloping and disorienting all at once, direction replaced by intimacy. She felt the tree sway, rocking the tree house with it much as an elegant, gentle man might waltz with his partner."

Byrne Miller remained active throughout her long career, forming a dance school and staying involved in the performing arts until her death. This sterling example of outward vitality and inner youth sets the tone, for Byrne's personality is a striking one that springs to vivid life from the pages of this well-crafted biography.

The picturesque community of Beaufort, South Carolina, pitted against the urban sophistication of New York sets the contrasting backdrop, with jaunts into Connecticut, New Mexico, and the Virgin Islands. Pieced together much like a scrapbook, this lack of order strangely enhances every impression. Ability to see the *after* prior to the *before* allows greater insight than a linear approach.

For those who have ever needed or actively sought the companionship of maternal guidance without genetic ties, *The Other Mother* is a fine example of a classy relationship. Filled with the wisdom of a creative genius, this touching story will enrich the lives of those who care to plunder its pages for bits of advice.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (Winter 2014)

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