

mothers across this strange city as I leave my greatest creation, my greatest love with someone else.”

Clere addresses the need to find childcare while she is pregnant to ensure a place for her yet-to-be-born child and reflects on this contradictory situation: “My child is part of this generation of children with weekend parents.” Accompanying this revelation are haunting colour images of her preschool son, first sitting in the middle of a colourless street playing with toys while grey-coloured adults walk by, and then sitting all alone on a deserted downtown crosswalk. Clere further acknowledges, “I’m part of this generation of mothers who is torn,” as she is shown standing alone and looking forlorn in the empty street. She articulates feelings of guilt, the need for independence, and her intense longing to maintain a connection with her son. As a mother she feels invisible, yet wants another baby to counter this sense of negation.

Clere’s film addresses the tension many urban Western women experience between the “me who wants to be a good mother versus the me who works a 40-hour week.” *A Hard Place* has international status with official selections at the Women in the Director’s Chair International Film Festival, Chicago; Shorts Film Festival, Adelaide; River Run International Film Festival, North Carolina; and St. Kilda Film Festival, Melbourne.

Because I Said So: 33 Mothers Write About Children, Sex, Men, Aging, Faith, Race & Themselves

Camille Peri and Kate Moses, eds.
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Reviewed by Jessica B. Burstrem

Camille Peri and Kate Moses’s *Because I Said So: 33 Mothers Write About Children, Sex, Men, Aging, Faith, Race & Themselves* is an exhilarating and vindicating collection of narratives by mothers who are coping with expectations for themselves. For instance, Fufkin Vollmayer must disregard her own single mother’s rage when she chooses to become a single mother herself. Mary Morris has to labour to not be an angry, controlling, frightening parent like her father. Karin L. Stanford comes to the decision to reject fairy tales and not remain silent about sexism within the Black community in order to be a good example to her daughter. Lisa Teasley leaves New York City to escape “mental slavery”—the racism that she and her multiracial family experienced there—which was hindering her ability to mother.

For many contributors to this volume, expectations of themselves originate with society's expectations of mothers. Ayelet Waldman has to resist thinking of herself as a "bad mother" for loving her husband more than their children. Janet Fitch must decide whether being a "good mother" means that she should place her child's needs before her own. Constance Matthiessen tells how psychologist Judith Wallerstein's assertion of the needs of children kept her awake at night. Rosellen Brown must come to terms with the impact that her work might have on her child. Ariel Gore (of *Hip Mama* fame), as a lesbian single mother, struggles with stereotypical ideas about a mother's versus a father's role when she finds herself acting as both parents.

Jennifer Allen also struggles with heteronormativity and gender-based ideals; unlike her fellow contributors, however, she does not question these ideals. When two of her sons, aged three and six, see her naked, she scrutinizes her breasts, thighs, and waist, asking herself, "Am I, in total, womanly enough to be the standard bearer of sexuality for all their long lives ahead of them?" (97). Even more problematic is her characterization of "a pile of boy trophies"—including action figures, trucks, and sports trophies—as a "chromosomal-XY mess" (99). And she expects that once they are men, "when you tell them that you love them, they will tell you, 'It's your job, Mom,' and you will thank them" (104). Maternal sacrifice is present in other essays as well. Rahna Reiko Rizzuto, in a custody suit, agrees to settle her family's case out of court, and Andrea Lawson Gray sells her home in order to keep her children in private school.

Unlike Jennifer Allen, other writers grapple with how to mother their sons. Mariane Pearl (the widow of murdered journalist Daniel Pearl) determines not to hide the truth about his father from their son; Cecelie S. Berry decides to educate her sons about race issues; and Ana Castillo carefully walks the tightrope between allowing her son to make his own decisions and raising him to be the kind of man a feminist would hope to raise. As Kristen Taylor writes, "Mothers always dream big" (167). Other narratives exemplify challenging choices. Ann Hulbert describes her decision to protect her daughter from some of the worry that plagues children today; Charo Gonzalez and her husband conceal some of their previous risky behaviours from their children; and editor Moses cannot bring herself to burden her children with the news of her miscarriage.

Rather than classify and organize the narratives—as I have done here—the editors allow them to speak individually and collectively across one another. This is a thought-provoking, often haunting book; it cannot be read in one sitting, but it is deeply rewarding.