

How to Get a Girl Pregnant

Karleen Pendleton Jimenez.
Toronto, ON: Tighrope Books, 2011.

REVIEWED BY SAMANTHA WALSH

In *How To Get A Girl Pregnant*, Karleen Pendleton Jimenez uses a memoir format to explore and share her experience as a self-identified queer butch woman conceiving a child using artificial insemination. The author offers a multi-dimensional perspective which complicates and animates what could easily be a medicalized recounting of the process of getting pregnant. She creates a layered story reminding the reader nothing exists in a vacuum—identities and experiences intersect.

This collection of fifteen, first-person vignettes links together the story of conceiving a child when your partner does not make sperm. The narratives move back and forth through time and space, with a mix of storytelling, letter writing, and conversation. For example, early in the book, Pendleton Jimenez shares a story of scouting potential sperm donors at a bar. Pendleton Jimenez uses both artificial means to attempt to get pregnant but, from time to time, also picks up men in bars as potential conceiving partners. This admission complicates and enriches the story by highlighting how expensive and time consuming artificial means are to conceive a child. The story complicates dominant narratives of who mothers are and what they do.

The author also provides an interesting commentary on gender relations and sexuality. Following the story of scouting a man in a bar, she juxtaposes the next story as a reflection on a conversation with her mother. Although she had not come out to her family at that point in the story, she felt her mother was somehow aware of her sexuality. When her mother questioned her desire for children, the author reflected that she was unsure of many things in that moment but she was sure she wanted a baby at some point in her life. The death of her mother solidified that want. She positioned the relationship between mother and child as the strongest bond one can have. She writes “If I could no longer have a mother then I would become one” (9). As a reader I was endeared to this idea of the relationship between a mother and child being powerful and symbiotic and I found myself praying that the author would soon get her wish.

This story reminded me of Anne Finger’s memoir, *Past Due*, about a disabled woman’s experience of conception, childbirth, and mothering. Both texts consider who is a mother and when is it time to mother. While Finger who becomes pregnant unintentionally wants to feel her body create some-

thing, Pendleton Jimenez wants to become the mother she has lost. In both texts, mothering is not just about the producing a child but an experience which brings context and meaning to one's own life and body. Both authors use their journey to motherhood as an occasion to reflect on their social position and identity. Pendleton Jimenez presents the experience as an opportunity to dwell in one's own identity. The author grounds the work in reflection and analysis of her own identity.

The book is accessible for the lay reader but would be a useful teaching resource that explores and complicates the journey to motherhood. The author paints an honest, raw picture that subtly disrupts the taken-for-granted assumptions that there is a certain type of person who mothers, a certain type of person who hungers for a baby, and a specific path to conceiving and growing a baby. While this is certainly a relevant and timely text, I would have liked to see the author discuss more deeply the concepts of privilege that influence who is able to engage in such a journey of conception.

Reference

Finger, Anne. *Past Due: A Story of Disability, Pregnancy and Birth*. Seattle: Seal Press, 1990. Print.

Our Bodies, Whose Property?

Anne Phillips.
Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013.

REVIEWED BY JEN RINALDI

In *Our Bodies, Whose Property?*, Anne Phillips considers the implications to framing bodies with property rhetoric. Though chapter topics seem disparate, they all involve bodies made available in market spaces for rent or sale. The author operates according to the premise that bodies remind “us of our shared vulnerability,” (11) but property discourses isolate persons and bracket out our mutual vulnerabilities.

Phillips's first chapter overviews theories of the body, including Ronald Dworkin's consideration of the prophylactic line “that comes close to making the body inviolate” (39) by marking bodies for self-ownership. This boundary-line of skin binds and separates bodies from one another, and circumscribes the entitlements persons have to bodily control. The ideal of personal