

the speaker's arms act as a seat belt for her child on a city bus, protecting him from the world outside, "seams of telephone and power lines, / worlds held within, beyond" (77). This image reinforces the sense of time frozen in motion, symbolizing the inevitable release of the child into the world.

The speaker in Lam's collection comes of age in a violent home where Cantonese culture meets Western culture amid her mother's "... indecipherable/ torrents of Cantonese punctuated/ by pots and plates flung at linoleum" (14). Only once a year, at New Year's Eve, her mother skilfully creates what her children crave from her, "real food—what came from her hands" (15). As an adult, the speaker starts holiday traditions of her own based in Western culture. The falling gingerbread house she makes with her son is juxtaposed to the successful food her mother created. The gingerbread house becomes a metaphor for change, for movement between cultures, and between personal life stories. "No matter how I iced it or propped it up," she says, "the roof slid down. Then broke" (41). The speaker attempts to move forward within the messiness of change, her relationships with both her mother and her son pivoting around her.

The body in *Enter the Chrysanthemum* is generally untethered, longing to be nurtured, connected. This longing is described explicitly in the book's opening poem and symbolically in the poem "Dream." Throughout the poems in Lam's collection, the child-speaker longs for her mother's care, and similarly the adult/mother-speaker longs for a lover's care. Both speakers collide in a single body attempting to navigate a complex world where neither is ever required. The final image of the collection brings her to the present, reconciling time and tradition in "[a] plate of simple food. Beside us, / the ones we love" (81). In mothering terms, Lam seems to be saying mothering is seldom a perfect act, but most of the time, it is good enough. It gets us to where we need to be.

## **Brown Bodies, White Babies: The Politics of Cross-Racial Surrogacy**

Laura Harrison

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Are we headed for a dystopian future in which poor racialized women bear white children for economically-privileged white families? Or does assisted reproduction offer new ways of family building that challenge patriarchal

and racist norms? Laura Harrison's *Brown Bodies, White Babies: The Politics of Cross-Racial Surrogacy* interrogates discourses of gestational surrogacy to explore the themes of race, kinship, and gender. It includes an interesting survey of contested surrogacy cases, racialized reproductive labour, databases of egg donors versus surrogate databases, and reproductive tourism. Harrison argues that cross-racial surrogacy, and the idea of race itself, furthers white privilege. While Harrison claims to adopt an intersectional feminist framework that considers the potential of assisted reproduction to destabilize normative ideologies, Harrison's approach is, from my perspective, too abstracted from the complexities and diversity of lived experiences.

The book's lack of context begins with the failure of the author to situate herself in relation to the subject matter. In her Acknowledgments (and p. 14), Harrison tells us she was pregnant with her first child when she started to write and pregnant with her second while revising the manuscript. She does not identify her skin colour or whether she participated in assisted reproduction. She does announce she herself was pregnant and gave birth to two daughters, and she thanks her partner, who has a traditionally male name. It appears that the author may have reproductive and heteronormative privilege.

From this largely decontextualized vantage point, **Brown Bodies** disconnects race from lived realities and essentializes its meaning. Harrison's arguments are not always well-linked to evidence. The literature suggests that most surrogates are white women (33) but Harrison claims there is a "growing trend of cross-racial gestational surrogacy" (90). This is not definitively established, but in any case, her project is a theoretical, not empirical, one.

Harrison seeks to problematize intended parents' selection of gamete donors based on race, contrasting it with the willingness of white intended parents to use gestational surrogates from racialized communities. Her discussion is again kept at the level of abstraction, with negative judgment ascribed to infertile families who consider the skin tone of the egg donor. In contrast, Harrison does not interrogate the race-related decision-making of those who have fertility privilege and whose reproductive choices are deemed natural and private.

Harrison dismisses and implicitly criticizes the often profoundly-felt desire to have children who are/look the same as oneself, without context or further exploration. The reality is that many people who rely on assisted reproduction want to have children who "look like them," just like other (fertile heterosexual cisgendered) people. Family resemblance is largely imagined—my brown spouse and I have been seen as biological sisters because race disappeared in the face of the unintelligibility of a lesbian relationship—but when a significant majority of people see "race," the imagined becomes real.

Yes, race is a social construction rather than a biological reality, but it mat-

ters very much in our current social and political context and has lived effects; we can not challenge racism by abolition of the idea of race altogether. Harrison is so invested in the idea that race is not real that she questions marketing a drug specifically to African Americans when research showed improved outcomes for that group (136-137). Why criticize the use of race to save lives? While it can be used for evil, where possible, it seems to me that race should be strategically deployed for good.

Harrison ignores that race is not only experienced as oppression; it is also a marker of community and kinship. For some, perhaps particularly Jewish, indigenous, and Black parents, preservation of race is a means of resistance. Race creates not just exclusion but also serves as a means of inclusion and a potential tool of anti-racist struggle. In our current social and political context, skin tone has lived impacts that may be reasonably considered by intended parents.

My family was created through cross-racial assisted reproduction. I am a white lesbian who chose a brown sperm donor with the hope of having brown children. We wanted mixed race children so they could “look like” my spouse, so she could collect them after school without being assumed to be the nanny. The children’s brown skin visibly links them to their co-mother, to her heritage, her extended family and community, to which I also feel better linked as the mother of brown children. As my family attests, cross-racial assisted reproduction sometimes challenges white privilege and the traditional heteronormative family. I would have liked Harrison to better explore alternative possibilities that expand our imaginary, but instead felt confined by her essentialist approach.

From my perspective, then, Harrison insufficiently fails to acknowledge and explore that cross-racial assisted reproduction can assist in radically challenging essentialized conceptions of race and family. The 2017 legislative amendments to parentage in Ontario illustrate that, insofar as assisted reproduction separates parentage from genetic connection, it assists LGBTQ families to be better recognized as equal. Similarly, I would suggest that race itself is not only a social construction that furthers racism and must be abolished; it too can be strategically deployed for beneficial, even transformative, purposes.