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The Surrogate's Song — A Sign of Our Confused Times

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Writing in the December 11, 2005 edition of the *New York Times*, Lisa Baker describes her experience as a surrogate mother. Her self-portrait as a surrogate should serve as a warning of what happens when reproduction is severed from marriage and the procreative bond.

She talks of her decision to serve as a surrogate mother in terms of altruism and her “leftover reproductive capacity.” Eventually, she decided to work with homosexual male couples.

In her words: *At my university and through the Unitarian Universalist church, I was becoming friends with many gay couples. It occurred to me I could take my offer one step further by extending it to a gay male couple who wanted to have children. I would be providing an egg as well as a uterus, but I could do that, couldn't I?*

Evidently, she could. *The process was not unlike online dating, but instead of selling yourself, you're selling your genes and your fertility: details like SAT scores, Ivy League degrees and physical health and appearance get more prominent play than one's fetishes and measurements. In my ad I said I was specifically seeking a gay couple, and within days I got a promising response from California.*

These guys had been together for 10 years: one was in entertainment, the other a nurse. They explained they had investigated adoption but found it difficult for gay men. They had been at this for a while and already had screened many potential surrogates.

After the baby was born: *I hadn't expected it to be so hard. Which made me feel stupid. Why wouldn't it be hard for a mother to give up a baby she had carried, a baby that was part her? Even though I knew she wasn't mine - had never been mine - she and I were one organism. Despite all my mental preparation I felt as if she had been ripped out of my body, ripped out of my arms.*

Nevertheless, Baker came to terms with the fact that the baby girl was “clearly in the right place.” So, how does she think of this child? “I search for the right words to describe how I feel about her. She feels like a niece to me, but more than a niece. I feel I have a special responsibility toward her, but what is it?”

It's a bit late to ask that question. To state the obvious: Surrogate motherhood is redefining motherhood itself. What's next?

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