

Film

Room to Be in the Middle: A Film about Genderqueer Pregnancy

BY SARAH E. FRYETT

Cyn Lubow, *A Womb of Their Own*. Serious Play Films, 2016. 85 mins. Licensing options: seriousplayfilms.com/purchase.

This documentary offers a probing and compassionate examination of six masculine-identified individuals and their pregnancies. The film opens with conversations about gender identity and moves on to observations about beards, breasts, childhood, and the choice to be pregnant. The final provocative discussions revolve around the future of genderqueer parenting. The voice of director Cyn Lubow, who is a psychotherapist, a “gender-complicated birth parent,” and one of the subjects of the film, frames the piece. The interviews with Rae (partner Kerrick), Lorenzo, Darcy (partner Heather), A.K., and Cyn are raw, unfiltered, and stirring, and each participant advances a distinct, thoughtful perspective. The interviews are conducted in the intimate space of the participants’ homes, allowing the viewer to feel like a friend invited in for a chat.

Much of the film involves examining conceptualizations of bodies, gender, sexuality, and identity. Other topics include facial hair, clothing, and breasts (before and after pregnancy). Though many interviewees had complex relationships with their breasts prior to pregnancy, a few noted changed opinions afterward. Cyn observes, “I was very grateful that I had

breasts,” and A.K. notes, “I formed a new relationship with them.” On the surface, the questions asked might seem too personal, but the participants’ answers explore areas of genderqueer/gender-nonbinary territory that are often ignored. Morgan, for instance, advocates for the term *genderqueer* and sees themselves as a “fabulous gay man”; Darcy comments, “I identify in the middle space”; and A.K. self-labels as a “faggy butch.” These firsthand, unscripted accounts create a reflective narrative, which opens a space for conversations about sex, sexuality, and gender.

The narrative develops to include the partners and children of many of the interviewees and thus offers a comprehensive picture of participants’ lives. Rae and Kerrick depict a loving partnership, with the camera often catching a shared smile or a kiss. Heather and Darcy hold hands during much of the interview, and when discussing gender, Heather chimes in with, “I don’t see Darcy as being any less masculine, even with the pregnancy. I still see him as the same person — my pregnant husband.”

Along with the partners, the children of Lorenzo, A.K., and Cyn make sustained appearances, revealing not only the complexities of those relationships but also the love.



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The film's only shortcoming is its failure to examine some of the prevalent struggles faced by the trans/gender-non-binary community — for instance, health insurance, medical care, workplace discrimination, bullying, and violence — in a meaningful way. But perhaps the director's idea was to present not the tragic but the hopeful — something rarely shown by traditional media. The narrative is one of hope and positivity, and the final shot of cute, cooing

babies signals a possible future where the either/or terms of the gender binary will be replaced, as Rae says encouragingly, “[with] room for people to be in the middle.”

Whether the title reminds you of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* or the baseball film *A League of Their Own*, Cyn Lubow's *A Womb of One's Own* certainly earns a place among feminist classics.

[Sarah E. Fryett, Ph.D., is an assistant professor in the Department of English and Writing at the University of Tampa. Her work revolves around feminist and queer theory as well as philosophy, pedagogy, and media studies.]



Miriam Greenwald