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EYE OF MY HEART

27 Writers Reveal the Hidden Pleasures and Perils of Being a Grandmother

Edited by Barbara Graham
Introduction by Mary Pipher, Ph.D.

“The stories are so fresh and fundamental that one is left feeling that the subject has never been cracked open before.”

—Harriet Lerner, Ph.D., author of *The Dance of Anger*

“This is a special book, enlightening, engaging, and deeply moving.”

—Julia Alvarez, author of *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*

“Finally, a look at grandmothering that is decidedly unsentimental.”

—Cokie Roberts, author of *We Are Our Mothers' Daughters*

What does it mean to be a grandmother in our fast changing world in which boomers are reinventing the role for themselves, just as they once redefined marriage, motherhood and career? Considering that 58%, more than 27 million, of grandparents in the U.S. are boomers—a number that is skyrocketing—this is no small question. When writer Barbara Graham’s granddaughter was born two years ago, Graham felt a host of complicated, unexpected emotions, in addition to a swell of love. And when at ten-weeks-old tiny Isabelle Eva suddenly moved with her parents to Paris from Graham’s neighborhood in Washington, DC, Graham was devastated. In an effort to make sense of her new status as a grandmother, as well as her grief at being separated from her granddaughter—and finding nothing narrative, nothing literary on the subject—Graham reached beyond the self-help literature lining the bookshelves to a group of remarkable authors, also grandmothers, half of them boomers, to tell the *real* stories about grandmotherhood that usually go untold.

The result is **EYE OF MY HEART: 27 Writers Reveal the Hidden Pleasures and Perils of Being a Grandmother** (HarperCollins Publishers; April 2009; \$24.95) edited by Barbara Graham, with an introduction by Mary Pipher, a groundbreaking collection of essays that chronicle the complexity of a role that is as primal as parenthood, but which is rarely remarked upon except in the most patronizing and

sentimental terms. Taken together, the stories in this collection offer a bold and nuanced view of grandmotherhood today by some of our most gifted writers, among them:

Anne Roiphe learns the hard way to keep her mouth shut and her opinions to herself.

Elizabeth Berg marvels at witnessing her child give birth to *her* child.

Beverly Donofrio tries to make amends with her grandkids for her failings as a teenage mother.

Judith Viorst exposes the high-stakes competition for Most Fabulous Grandchild.

Jill Nelson grapples with mother-daughter issues triggered by the birth of her grandson.

Barbara Graham readjusts her expectations about her new role when her infant granddaughter is moved suddenly from Graham's neighborhood to Europe.

Judith Guest confesses her failed attempt at emulating her own saintly grandmother.

Bharati Mukherjee overcomes her strict Hindu upbringing to embrace her adopted Chinese granddaughters.

Lynn Lauber finds the joy in grandmotherhood that she missed out on as a mother when she gave her infant daughter up for adoption.

Sallie Tisdale pays a high price—literally, emotionally—for her fast multiplying brood of grandkids whose parents are unable to support them.

Rona Maynard debunks the myths and stereotypes as she figures out what sort of grandmother to be.

Marcie Fitzgerald*, who thought she was done with motherhood, is raising her mentally ill daughter's young son.

Abigail Thomas plots her escape when she can't bear to bake one more cake.

Ellen Gilchrist reveals how grandparenthood has eased her fear of death.

*pseudonym

Free of platitudes, the essays in **EYE OF MY HEART** are linked by a common thread: a love for grandchildren that knows no bounds, despite inescapable boundaries and limitations.

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Barbara Graham is an essayist, author, playwright, and editor. Her essays and articles have appeared in many magazines—including *O, the Oprah Magazine*, where she has been a contributing writer, *Glamour*, *National Geographic Traveler*, *Redbook*, *Tricycle*, *Time*, *Vogue*, and *Utne Reader*—and have been collected in many anthologies. Graham is the author of *Women Who Run with the Poodles*, a satirical take on the dark side of the self-help movement. Her plays have been published by Dramatists Play Service and produced off-Broadway in New York and at theaters around the country. She lives in Washington, D.C., with her husband, Hugh Delehanty.

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27 Writers Reveal the Hidden Pleasures and Perils of Being a Grandmother

Edited by Barbara Graham

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Serial rights have been sold to the following publications:

More – Barbara Graham (April 2009); *Good Housekeeping* - Elizabeth Berg (March 2009); *O: The Oprah Magazine* - Abigail Thomas (April 2009); *AARP* - Judith Viorst (May-June 2009); *More Canada* - Rona Maynard (April 2009); *Washingtonian* - Kate Lehrer (April 2009); and *Washingtonian* - Marita Golden (May 2009).