

Frozen on the birth channel

Body Language

Shani Raviv

Almost every woman I know is pregnant or planning. Either high on post-conception, heavy with foetus in utero, panicked for the Caesarean section booked for Monday or relentlessly copulating every time there is suspected ovulation.

It is like somebody has rewired the big picture and it has frozen on the birth channel.

I even woke up this morning with morning sickness. Not because I'm in sync with the trend, but because it was morning. And every day rampant with pregnant femmes on the loose leaves me feeling like a barren spinster — and I was only born in the Seventies.

At a friend's baby shower I was the only adult jumping with other women's kids on the kiddie trampoline. The women who had borne the offspring reneged on their parental duties and relegated their toddlers to a few of us surrogate moms.

"How old are you?" asked a fellow surrogate to the two-and-a-half-year-old who, moments before, had hoisted up her frilly frock, squatted on the lawn and made a poo. The child shrugged.

"Well, when is your birthday, then?" she rephrased emphatically. "Oh, it's going to be a fairy party," the little girl answered.

How are we supposed to muster up more informed questions for tots when all we get to do is eavesdrop on other women's baby talk — real moms conversing about daycare and grommets, lullabies and potty training? And we want so badly to be a part of their "maternaldom". We want to



'Every day rampant with pregnant femmes on the loose leaves me feeling like a barren spinster.' Photograph: Shani Raviv

say that our cervixes too have dilated. We want to feel the life floating in our amniotic fluids. We want to prove that we can locate our perineums sooner than we can find our G-spots.

But the only time I felt somewhat included in the whole fertility hype was when I accidentally left the water running in my washing machine and it flooded my apartment. It really felt symbolic. Like my waters had broken.

Then this morning my room-mate found me curled up on the couch cradling a furry faux monkey to my belly. She asked if I had baby envy. When I told her a hot water bottle was encased within the fur to allevi-

ate serious period cramps, she wanted to know if I was mourning my menstruation.

She's right, I've just got a really bad case of baby envy. They say the craving comes with the age. And yet there is nothing really stopping me from having a baby today — it's just that, well, life is in the way.

But baby envy is bad. It's very different from say, penis envy, which, if so desired, can be satiated with a strap-on. Baby envy is by its very nature obscure because there is nothing really obstructing the flow, except (hopefully) a condom.

It can quite easily be permanently allayed with one single spurt but

some of us cannot take the plunge just yet. Maybe it is because succumbing for that split second leads to a lifetime of restrictions and proscriptions. Or maybe some of us gals are still way too busy spending our extra savings on self-luxuries — such as two-ply toilet paper with clouds or bikini-lines styled like the Alps — to even think about laying out booty for nappies and teats.

So instead we live out our fantasies vicariously as babysitters, aunts or involuntary surrogate mothers at baby showers. I live it out as all of the above.

Meanwhile, my younger sister is already on to her second child. Her hubby has just bought the station wagon — the mobile breeding ground — and parked it off in suburbia behind a white iron gate. Last night they went to see some trashy flick at a shopping centre and left their two-year-old with her spinster aunt whose city apartment is not exactly Tinka Tonka.

My niece was somewhat deprived of puerile entertainment in my pad. At bath time I had to throw in my toothbrush holder shaped like a hippo's head for her amusement. And for after-bath fun we did somersaults on my king-size bed.

The one thing I thought I really managed like a big mamma pro was to fry up three free-range eggs with tomato sauce for her supper. But my sister called me this morning to say that my niece was up all night with stomach cramps and that the paediatrician said it was an overdose of gas.

Maybe eggs should come with warning labels like medication: "Children under two years may only have up to one egg daily". Or maybe from now on when it comes to making eggs, I'll just stick to my monthly ovulation.