

Peter Andreas, *Rebel Mother: My Childhood Chasing the Revolution*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017. Pp. 322. Hardcover, \$35.00.

In its exploration of an unusual mother and son relationship, *Rebel Mother* creates a vivid portrait of a complex and fascinating woman, probes the intersection of the personal and political, and challenges stereotypes of Mennonite life in unique ways. It is also a moving and thoughtful account of the author's own formation as an individual and a political thinker.

Drawing on primary sources—notably his mother's copious journals and correspondence—as well as specific personal memories, Peter Andreas retraces the peregrinations of his unusual childhood following his mother throughout Central and South America in this memoir that more than lives up to its provocative title. As the John Hay Professor of International Studies at Brown University, Andreas is the author of ten books on international relations, but this is his first attempt at personal writing. The memoir draws on his layered perspective as a scholar of twentieth century politics, but succeeds in creating a riveting story of a marriage, a family, and a coming of age that speaks to multiple audiences.

Andreas offers the reader salient anecdotes as well as facts and details about his upbringing with his political activist mother, managing to suspend judgement most of the time and allowing readers to draw their own conclusions. The result is not only a remarkably objective portrait of his mother's life, parents' marriage, and his own formation as a writer, scholar and thinker, but an intensely personal record of an era in late twentieth-century activism. Beyond this, it conveys a sense of the author's Mennonite heritage as filtered through his parents' moves towards assimilation into different factions of the larger American culture.

Peter's pacifist Mennonite family broke up when he was four years old. His first memory is couched in what he calls "the war over Peter": his father's surprise appearance to pick him up at nursery school, and being tailed by his mother in her race to retrieve him on the day she moved out in June 1969. Perhaps since she had been the primary caretaker, the two older boys, Joel and Ronald, insisted on moving out with their mother. Later Peter's mother would abduct Peter twice from his father's house, taking him with her on her journeys to Berkeley, Chile, Peru, and Denver in search of the revolution she so steadfastly wanted to serve.

The marriage of Carl Andreas and Carol Rich echoes and sometimes exaggerates the seismic cultural changes in middle class American life at mid-century. The couple met and married in North Newton, Kansas (location of Bethel College, a Mennonite institution) when Carol was seventeen and Carl twenty-four. Carl waited in North Newton while Carol rushed through Bethel College in two years. They immediately moved to Minneapolis to attend the University of Minnesota: she for an MA in psychology, he for an MA in hospital administration. When two sons followed in quick succession, their remarkable forward-looking marriage became bogged down with a traditional division of labor, with the ambitious and intellectual Carol as housewife and mother, and Carl as breadwinner. To relieve her boredom, Carol convinced Carl to take an assignment as a hospital administrator in Pakistan for four years. When they returned to America at the beginning of the 1960s ferment of Civil Rights, Anti-War protests and feminism, Carol plunged into protest activities and feminist groups; both Carol and Carl, with their pacifist leanings, attended Vietnam War protests with their children. Carol enrolled in a Ph.D. program in sociology at Wayne State University; Peter was born in 1965 while his mother was in the midst of writing her dissertation.

Incompatible personalities, ideological differences, and ideas of what family required ultimately drove Carol and Carl apart. Carol was devoted to living her political beliefs, including a challenge to monogamy and all aspects of middle-class propriety; Carl continued the construction of a 4-bedroom suburban house near Carol's tenure-track University job even after she had left him. While Carol's radical ideas may challenge many readers, she is, perhaps, a contemporary version of the radical Anabaptists willing to sacrifice family and security for deeply-held beliefs.

Although Carl succeeded in claiming custody of Peter, a year later Carol abducted Peter from kindergarten and moved with all three sons to Berkeley, California, where they lived in a group house with other counter-culture types, sharing household tasks and cooking. Disillusioned with the bourgeois nature of Berkeley activism, Carol moved a few years later with the two younger boys to South America. Joel, the oldest at age sixteen, stayed in Berkeley. Ronald soon took off on independent travel throughout South America, but Peter grew up traveling with his mother in Ecuador, Chile, and Peru, intent on contributing to the revolution against capitalist exploitation and fending for himself when her preoccupation with revolution, cultural crossing, and young male revolutionaries overshadowed her concern for her child. Even though he spent some time with his father and his refreshingly

understanding stepmother, Rosalind, Peter, when asked by a judge who he wanted to live with, chose his mother because he thought she needed him more.

Significantly, both Peter and his oldest brother Joel have followed their mother into academic study, honouring her pioneering and radical mothering as well as the more stable footing offered by their father and stepmother. Joel, known for his political graphic “novels,” is an Associate Professor of Sociology at Johns Hopkins University specializing in social change in contemporary China. While their upbringing may stretch conventional ideas of propriety, clearly their fascinating careers owe much to their mother’s radical choices to live out her beliefs.

Rebel Mother is well worth reading and pondering—not only for its fascinating glimpse into an unusual family, but for its complex and thoughtful portrait of mothering and parenting in a world where both men and women claim the privilege of becoming fully developed adults through work and love while shaping the next generation.

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