

## **Coming to Life: Philosophies of Pregnancy, Childbirth and Mothering**

Sarah LaChance Adams and Caroline R. Lundquist, eds.  
Bradford, Ontario: Demeter Press, 2012.

REVIEWED BY SHAWNA LEWKOWITZ

In their introduction to *Coming to Life: Philosophies of Pregnancy, Childbirth and Mothering*, editors Sarah LaChance Adams and Caroline R. Lundquist note that this collection of essays is intended to fill a gap in feminist philosophy. The editors provide background theory in philosophy, specifically how philosophy relates to feminism and the topics under consideration. By building on the philosophical work of Simone de Beauvoir, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva, for example, this collection bridges the usual divide between women's experience and philosophical investigation.

Part one of the volume considers traditional forms of philosophy. Cynthia Coe's essay demonstrates how Plato's devaluation of becoming leads to the perception of pregnant women and children as fragile, which gives rise to maternal anxiety. Coe makes a convincing case for moving past this limiting perspective. Kayley Vernallis examines the idea of "manly courage"—which she labels Physical Pro-Social (PPS) courage—and how women's experiences of pregnancy and childbirth are excluded from this notion of courage. Within the historical context of Christianity, Aristotle, and other philosophers, Vernallis argues that women make courageous decisions that fit the paradigm of PPS courage and that childbirth is a form of PPS courage. This section concludes with an essay on subjectivity in women and the fetus/child, framed by Jacques Derrida's concept of hospitality. Theoretically dense, this first section may lie outside the scope of non-academic readers.

Part two focuses on ethics and the moral dilemmas relating to pregnancy, childbirth, and mothering. Gail Weiss contends that communal moral responsibility for a child is born out of the physical act of childbirth and goes beyond the mother's individual responsibility for her child. Dorothy Roger's essay on "Maternity, Identity and Absence" demonstrates how mothering identities remain with women who have given their children up for adoption. Rogers's work shows the fluidity of maternal identity and reminds us of the many ways that women identify as mothers. Finally, Melissa Burchard's compelling essay argues for the need for queer parenting practices when parenting children who have experienced previous abuse. Burchard urges readers to acknowledge the need for all parents to question hetero-normative frameworks of parenting as purportedly "ideal" ways to raise a child.

Part three treats the subject of politics. Essays in this section consider how pro-choice language restricts the pro-choice movement and limits services, supports, and access for women in pregnancy and childbirth. The political nature of the natural childbirth movement is also discussed in the context of privilege, identity, and as potentially disempowering for women.

Finally, part four probes the ambivalent imagery of pregnancy in popular culture. Here, Rebecca Tuvel deploys Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection to critique cultural attitudes toward breastfeeding. The volume closes with an analysis of feminist phenomenology and pregnancy.

This useful book is directed at scholars and advanced students across a range of disciplines; it is also accessible to readers outside of academe who are interested in pregnancy, childbirth, and mothering. Its greatest achievement lies in challenging the prevailing assumption that pregnancy, childbirth, and mothering unfold on a connected continuum.

## Adoption and Mothering

Frances J. Latchford, ed.  
Bradford, Ontario: Demeter Press, 2012.

REVIEWED BY MAYA E. BHAVE

*Adoption and Mothering* is an insightful compilation of thirteen interdisciplinary essays that explore adoption solely from the perspective of mothers. Editor Frances J. Latchford's academic background in women's studies, family studies, queer identity, and gender rights informs this group of essays that moves far beyond conventional adoption primers. Readers will not find the typical exegesis of the adoption triad or an overview of North American adoption history; instead, contributors examine what Latchford calls the "debate, discourse and politics" of adoption. Although the volume is not structured thematically, the first five essays focus explicitly on birth mothers while the next eight consider the experiences of adoptive mothers.

The first section focuses on how adoption is linked to the development of self and the explicit marginalization of birth mothers' experiences. March's work explores how birth mothers' deliveries are labeled "non-events," and thus their motherhood is negated and shrouded in "secrecy, lies, and shame." Sieger's and Pietsch's essays study the binary constructions of "good" and "bad" mothers based on racialized ideals, with birth mothers often viewed as "non-mothers." Sieger uses border identity theory to explain this racialized