

Teacher, Scholar, Mother: Re-Envisioning Motherhood in the Academy. Ed. Anna M. Young. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015.

Teacher, Scholar, Mother: Re-Envisioning Motherhood in the Academy offers a rich collection of perspectives that bring the everyday experiences of the 21st-century 'mother-scholar' into striking relief. As a whole, the volume deploys academic motherhood as a critical category of analysis and positions it as a nexus point through which individual stories of adversity and resilience coalesce. Its chapters collectively reveal the enduring hegemony of heteropatriarchal norms, policies, and structures within the interpersonal and institutional spaces of academia. Organized thematically into three sections, eighteen individual chapters unfold around a question editor Anna Young poses in the introduction: "*why is the academy, so full of such accomplished and smart and curious people, such a difficult place for mothers?*"(x). Responding to this question, the contributing authors explore various dimensions of this difficult terrain. They engage a range of methodologies, including qualitative studies, literary and media analyses, interviews, personal stories, and theoretical reflections. Consequently, the work offers edifying insights into the often-occluded realities mother-scholars face across the academy, as well as the myriad strategies they employ to negotiate their hybrid identities within it and assert agency in spaces that continue to define 'mother' as 'other.'

Perhaps the volume's most laudable attribute is its staging of a truly interdisciplinary dialogue around the thorny concerns facing mother-scholars today. The book congregates scholars from various career stages; from undergraduate and graduate students to instructors and mid-career faculty to senior professionals directing large research centers. Rather than engaging scholars with distinct research interests from within a single field, *Teacher, Scholar, Mother* draws together voices from impressively disparate disciplines like art, design and engineering, ethnomusicology, and nutrition, in addition to communications, sociology, and women's studies. In this regard the book succeeds in its charge to "re-envision" motherhood as a worthy category of inquiry and reflection for scholars of all disciplinary stripes, not just those of us in women and gender studies fields. The diverse disciplinary and professional positions assembled here speak to the variable ways mothering and maternal identities interpolate into all levels of academic life, often irrespective of one's age, field, pay grade, rank, and/or tenure status. Contributing authors also bring perspectives from a wide variety of institutional and non-institutional settings, demonstrating not only the increasingly-expansive notion of the academy in the 21st century, but likewise evincing the continued predominance of the 'universal male worker' ideal and its perpetual re-inscription across both 'traditional' and emergent academic environments. That is, these collective findings and stories expose how the specter of the unencumbered male scholar haunts the entrances, exits, and peripheries of the coveted ivory tower hallway despite the sharp increase in the number of women pursuing academic careers. Yet, the volume signals towards new epistemological and ontological understandings of the mother-scholar that counterpose the patriarchal norms and structures of academia because, as Sarah Childers (Chapter 8) argues, "there are far too many of us to anymore view it as impossible" (124).

Section One comprises seven chapters that pivot around the question of disciplinary and theoretical approaches to mothering in the academy. Most poignantly, the contributors underscore the importance of bridging theory and experience to elucidate the perils of

academic motherhood, to construct identity, to question the status quo, and to trace out a blueprint for change. Each of the seven chapters weave in the notion that mother-scholars navigate within a social system and a professional milieu that measure their value against a narrow, yet monolithic standard of what is “good.” While feminist scholars have long critiqued the dominant trope of the “good mother” as an oppressive apparatus of patriarchal capitalism, the authors here explore a number of new vantage points that expose its 21st-century influences, which are intensified by the neoliberal ethos that pushes all academics to absorb more work, generate more revenue, and increase productivity while institutional supports dwindle. Andrea Hunt (Chapter 1), for example, discusses how the “supermom” imperative follows the mother-scholar throughout their career, compounding the effects of a still male-dominated profession that lacks a specific mentoring structure for those who mother. Rundstrom Williams (Chapter 2) likewise interrogates how breastfeeding discourses, both medical and public, trade on the myth of the “good” mother and impinge on mothers’ prerogatives to choose bottle or breast. While this chapter does not engage this question in the context of academia specifically, the author’s claim that even minor changes in language might impel deeper paradigm shifts strikes a chord particularly within college and university settings that continue the slow, sometimes glacially slow, integration of campus-wide policies and services for post-partum advocacy, lactation and infant feeding support, and for the promotion of mothers’ and parents’ networks.

Three additional chapters offer fresh insights into the ways dominant discourses of the “good mother” permeate mothers’ relationships with their children and how such mother-child dynamics profoundly shape and are shaped by one’s experiences within the academy. Chapters 3, 5 and 7 explore how mother-scholars often approach child-rearing and define their maternal subjectivities *(m)otherwise*, or against dominant expectations and typologies, often centering feminist theory and praxis—even when not explicitly named as such. Catherine A.F. MacGillivray and their teenage son (Chapter 3), provide a unique window into these dynamics through their dialogue on the gendered and racialized dimensions and parenting philosophies that shape their family life. The inclusion of an adolescent’s impressions of being raised by a mother-scholar, and the choice to situate in the book’s theoretical section, challenges mainstream academic conventions that tend to eschew child-generated content as constituent of theory. Dustin Harp (Chapter 7) adds to this discussion by delving into their own fraught navigation of the 21st-century mediascape as a mother-scholar. Harp urges parents to embrace feminist and critical race theory lenses to their family’s media consumption, charging readers to “go forth and be a buzzkill” (107). Yet, their conclusions, and those reached in Iverson and Seher’s chapter on sabbatical experiences (Chapter 5), underscore the reality that, despite shifting maternal attitudes on such matters, nurturing and pedagogical labor still overwhelmingly falls to women already struggling to meet the competing demands of academia and mothering. These loci of gender inequity are precisely the places where a radical “re-envisioning” needs to manifest, but the authors, as a whole, fall back on the notion that those who mother bear the responsibility of negotiating within the system rather than dismantling its oppressive structures. In this way, Section One leaves the reader with a well-rounded sense of the problems of academic motherhood without a robust discussion of actionable solutions. The opening section succeeds in bringing disparate disciplines into conversation and the authors independently gesture towards some new horizons of research and promising epistemological

shifts for effacing the rigid boundaries we tend to draw between 'scholar' and 'mother' and between mother-scholars and others, particularly those elusive, and perhaps mythological, "good mothers" outside the realm of academia.

The latter two sections of the volume plot out additional embodiments, experiences, and expressions of the mother-scholar subjectivity. Of note, Sarah Childers (Chapter 8) uses new feminist materialism, particularly Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* (2006), to flesh out the complex "multiple figurations" of the mother-scholar subject. Her chapter offers the most theoretically rigorous take on the volume's central question, perhaps making it a better fit for Section One. Cristina Alcalde (Chapter 9) and Ama Oforiwa Aduonum (Chapter 15) offer perspectives from the Global South, Peru and Ghana respectively. They demonstrate the ways their cross-cultural studies have informed their mother-scholar selfhood and revealed how the disjunctures between mothering and professional labor transcends borders, creating, as Aduonum says, "a tapestry of experience" (229). Allison Antink-Meyer (Chapter 10) further explores the experience of border crossing between what they call the incongruent worlds of academia, specifically science, and parenting. The author asserts that the patriarchal structures of academia, rather than the epistemology of science, act as a "moat" impeding mother-scholars from successfully traversing the border between their family and professional worlds (149).

Finally, several chapters (13, 14, 16, 17) in the latter two sections offer critical revisions of the category 'mother-scholar,' expanding the definition to include those who experience serious illness, infertility, failed adoption, miscarriage, and child loss. These works reveal the critical exigence, for policy administrators and faculty colleagues specifically, to look beyond normative ideas of who and what experiences constitute academic motherhood and to recognize and align with those for whom the journey to this identity looks different from their own. That is, these authors affirm the need to further delink motherhood from heteronormative constructions of womanhood and from ableist assumptions about the body and reproduction. When read together, these chapters illustrate how far academia and its institutions have to go to be truly inclusive, in terms of culture and policy, of the myriad parental experiences and identities within scholarly professions. The authors also highlight how further recognition and inclusion of various pathways to and embodiments of academic motherhood creates opportunities for coalition-building across difference - for instance between LGBTQ+ academics and their heterosexual counterparts using ART - because as Elisabeth Kraus remarks, "the beauty of life and motherhood resides in the moments when our stories intersect with stories of others"(198). Most refreshingly, Layne Parish Craig (Chapter 17) adds that overturning normative narratives of academic motherhood dislodges the oppressive dictum of the "good mother" and "good scholar" in favor of "okayness" for all women (263).

The book's coda, although it lacks a formal conclusion chapter, is that mothering indeed disrupts academic careers in both beautifully affirming and painfully dispiriting ways. Mothering is both generative and destructive to academic pursuits; yet, as Martha Kalnin Diede (Chapter 16) contends, mother-scholars innovate ways to "stitch together lives around competing social demands" (239). Towards its titular objective to "re-envision" motherhood in the academy, the volume succeeds in making visible, from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, the multiplicity of experiences and identities that inhabit the category "mother-scholar." Yet, few of the authors present a clear *vision* for how mother-scholars and their allies might confront the 21st-century

neoliberal academic environment, particularly its ability veil its exploitative power in the co-optative language of superficial “work-life balance” and “family-friendly” policies without making substantive structural improvements to pay structures, benefits, leave programs, and childcare programs that would support those who mother. How, for instance, can we insert a new vision that places academic motherhood front and center in long-range strategic planning processes? And, how might we impel conferences, laboratories, and other spaces of academic exchange to reduce barriers to mother-scholar participation? These transformations have begun slowly, but even at very open-minded “child-inclusive” events, we continue to witness parent-scholars struggling to maintain their roles in the absence of fully re-envisioned spaces. It seems in doing the work of narrating and problematizing academic motherhood the volume addresses only the polemics, which, although an important first step, leaves the reader to imagine modes of redress, of building the bridge over the moat that separates ‘mother’ from ‘scholar’ (Antink-Meyer, 149). Beyond minor quibbles with the organization of chapters, the volume would also benefit from including a conclusion that ties together the main themes and plots out a *vision* for change based on the themes presented. The volume is also thin on non-normative perspectives that might further rupture the prevailing categorization of ‘mother’ as a biologically-related female and push the academy to see that the institution of academic motherhood affects more than those who identify as women. Overall, the book will be of critical importance to graduate students, early career tenure-track faculty, and those who occupy the increasingly expansive ranks of precariously-employed instructors and researchers, as it renders legible the fraught experiences of the mother-scholar and lays bare both the unique peril and possibilities of academic motherhood.