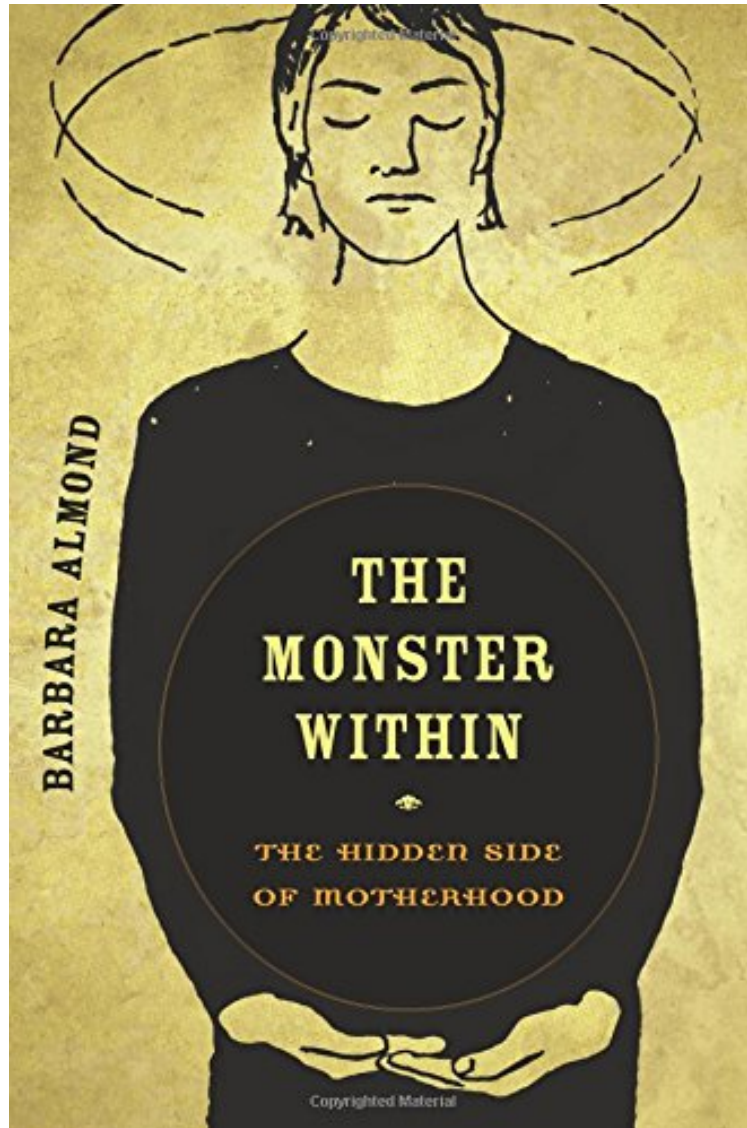


(Free and download) The Monster Within: The Hidden Side of Motherhood

The Monster Within: The Hidden Side of Motherhood

Barbara Almond

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Barbara Almond : The Monster Within: The Hidden Side of Motherhood before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Monster Within: The Hidden Side of Motherhood:

10 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Compassion for the dark sides of motherhood By Kaeli Vandertulip
Ambivalence is the ability to hold two completely contrasting emotions about an object or person at the same time. Almond writes in detail about a specific type of ambivalence--maternal ambivalence--in which mothers or mothers-to-be can both love and hate, fear and fetishize, or disdain and desire children. Rather than say this is unique to "bad mothers," Almond dissects and demonstrates the ways that all women have this form of ambivalence. She

shows the good and the bad of maternal ambivalence, from motherlove and self-sacrifice to child murderers and narcissistic mothers. She uses examples from her own clinical experience and literature. It seems appropriate that my feelings about this book are mixed. On the one hand, I appreciated her discussion of a topic that is all too often ignored, especially by women. She does an excellent job of showing how being a perfect mother is disastrous to mother and child, extols the "good enough mother" and explains the emotions that women often try very hard to ignore and deny. I appreciated her use of literature, not because I thought she had a great understanding of the literature, but because the characters she chooses to personify these feelings are much more fleshed out than her human case studies who are probably too embarrassed to be as honest as an author hiding behind his or her characters. On the other hand, her use of psychoanalysis to explain much of this condition got downright annoying. She focuses so much on early childhood (infancy and toddlerhood) and incest issues (the dreaded Oedipal complex) that she took away from her own thesis--that maternal ambivalence is normal and can be seen in wonderful, terrible, or mediocre mothers. Also, while her writing was technically excellent, she often went an entire chapter without saying much of anything. Her chapter on the ambivalence felt by the mothers of special needs children was especially disappointing and, while she brushed the surface of it, she always stopped short of saying anything useful about the ambivalence of step-mothers. In general, as an introduction to the notion of maternal ambivalence, this is an excellent resource. It is clear that this is a field that bears much more research and I appreciated seeing something approaching scholarly consideration of the topic. There are plenty of books in the popular press about this topic (Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother, Parenting Out of Control, Perfect Madness), but very few delve into the actual mind of mothers. This helps pave the way for more serious looks at a universal and important topic. 14 of 14 people found the following review helpful. Never too late! By violet Barbara Almond's wonderful phrase "the ubiquity of maternal ambivalence" was a great insight for me as I read, and looked back on my own years of motherhood. At times it seemed there would never be a time without small children needing everything! As much as I reveled in pregnancy, nursing, and all the small joys of raising children, I am sure I must have often felt confused and even embarrassed by the mixed feelings I had at times. Looking back, I realize I was lucky enough to have a wide circle of older friends, fellow day-care parents, and a husband who could take almost anything with a grain of salt, and a good dose of humor. But here's where the surprise lay. When I was about to become a grandmother, I was startled when I discovered how strong my ambivalence was. Friends and colleagues were gushing with excitement, while I felt as though I had barely escaped the long years of motherhood - why all the glorification? So reading this book felt like graduating into adulthood, no matter how belated. It was illuminating to read how natural the mixed feelings are. I highly recommend this book to women at any stage of life, and to the bewildered men in their lives who are often left on the sidelines observing the raw biology of new motherhood, not realizing they are watching the evolution of a new self, messy but amazingly creative. Hats off to the author for a real triumph of integration: literature, case history, and vignettes of contemporary society. Her compassion and honesty make this very tough subject a good read. Highly recommended. 12 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Compassion for the trials of mothering By Cyg Enriching and engaging. This wonderfully written book will help mothers, fathers, and therapists better appreciate and cope with the mix of positive and negative feelings which develop in the work of mothering. It shines a compassionate light on the difficult feelings mothers have in order to counter shame and isolation and foster thought and conversation about how best to manage in difficult circumstances. I enjoyed the book more than I expected from the title which exaggerates the negatives examined in the book. The writing is so fluid it eases the reader into absorption, reminding me of the best literature courses I've taken where fiction is used to illustrate the trials and wonders of being human. After reading this I'm inspired to reread some of the classics referred to and finally get to some I've never read. And, you can browse this book easily as well as keep it on your shelf for reference when particular mothering dilemmas beg for deeper consideration.

Mixed feelings about motherhood uncertainty over having a child, fears of pregnancy and childbirth, or negative thoughts about one's own children are not just hard to discuss, they are a powerful social taboo. In this beautifully written book, Barbara Almond brings this troubling issue to light. She uncovers the roots of ambivalence, tells how it manifests in lives of women and their children, and describes a spectrum of maternal behavior from normal feelings to highly disturbed mothering. In a society where perfection in parenting is the unattainable ideal, this compassionate book also shows how women can affect positive change in their lives.

Just the thing for a gray and drizzly autumn afternoon. Drawing on her thirty-seven years of practice as a psychoanalyst as well as her own experiences as a mother, Almond leads an adventurous tour through the shadowy, secret parts of the mothers' psyche. . . . An oddly compelling read.