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Review of Surrogates and Other Mothers: The Debates over Assisted Reproduction, by R. Macklin

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bioethics. Even where it goes astray, it provides a useful focus for creating a still more adequate theory.

LAURA M. PURDY
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Macklin, Ruth. *Surrogates and Other Mothers: The Debates over Assisted Reproduction*.

Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994. Pp. 254. \$44.95 (cloth); \$18.95 (paper).

Meet Bonnie and Larry Roberts. The Robertses are the fictional infertile couple whose encounter with the world of reproductive medicine frames this intriguing work. Bonnie suffers from uterine abnormalities which make pregnancy impossible, even though she has ovarian function. Larry is her fertile but somewhat irascible husband, who has been treated psychiatrically for post-traumatic stress syndrome. Together the Robertses decide to adopt, only to be told that they are ineligible. They decide to use Larry's sister as a surrogate, only to discover that she is HIV-positive. They decide to pursue commercial surrogacy, only to abort a genetically abnormal fetus that results. Finally, they decide to use a second surrogate, only to confront the demands of the surrogate for visitation rights to the Robertses' genetic offspring whom the surrogate has gestated for them.

Macklin acknowledges that this "extended hypothetical case" may seem far-fetched, but she believes it allows her "to present a large body of diverse information in a narrative style that helps convey the emotional force of the subject matter" (p. 2). To this end, Macklin introduces us to other fictional characters as well, including members of a state task force on reproduction: Maura O'Brien, chair of the task force; Teddi Chernacoff, bioethicist; Fr. Timothy Reardon, a Catholic priest and professor of theology; LeRoy Johnson, a state assemblyman; Andrea Goldwoman, a feminist activist; Dr. Roberta Bernstein, a psychologist; and Bill Ackerman, an attorney. As the Robertses attempt to sort through the difficult decision confronting them, they attend several open hearings of the task force and are treated to lively debates about cryopreservation of embryos, surrogacy, the meaning of parenthood, maternal-fetal conflict, and much else.

Even from this brief summary, it should be obvious that this is an unconventional book; indeed, I know of nothing else quite like it on assisted reproduction. Drawing on her own extensive professional experience as a bioethicist, including her work on the New Jersey Task Force on New Reproductive Practices and on an ethics advisory committee for an infertility clinic, Macklin gives flesh to the abstract philosophical debates about reproductive technology by highlighting the actual contexts in which such debates occur and by drawing out the implications of specific philosophical arguments for the various characters in the work. In doing so, Macklin provides an accessible and informative glimpse into the world of contemporary bioethics as it is actually experienced by patients, physicians, bioethicists, and others.

Much as I admire Macklin's efforts to do justice to the emotional force of these issues and to provide a heightened sense of context by eschewing standard philosophical analysis in favor of exploring the experiences, thoughts, and feelings of the characters in this story, there are problems with this volume. One concerns audience. Who precisely is the intended audience? Macklin does not tell us, and the answer is by no means clear. Philosophers are likely to be frustrated by the necessarily fragmented character of much of the argumentation. Physicians are likely to be impatient with the leisurely pace of narration. Infertile couples are likely to disdain reading about a hypothetical case when their own problems are all too real. A second problem concerns balance. Although, for the most part, Macklin represents a variety of viewpoints fairly, there are some glaring lapses in this regard. For example, at one point, Macklin has Bonnie and Larry discuss some of the ethical issues raised by reproductive technology with the Rev. Karl Schmidt, in whose mouth Macklin places the words of Paul Ramsey and Leon Kass to ludicrous effect. Discussing the counseling session afterward, Bonnie and Larry conclude that Rev. Schmidt is "obscure and dogmatic," as indeed he is. But he is so because Macklin has made him so. By cobbling together disparate arguments taken radically out of context and putting them in the mouth of a supercilious and judgmental prig, Macklin has given us a caricature. Apart from the fact that Ramsey and Kass deserve better, this caricature points to a deeper problem: no argument is really explored deeply enough; every argument deserves better. Even the arguments of Macklin's spokesperson, Teddi Chernacoff, could be more fully elaborated at points.

Surrogates and Other Mothers is a creative and ambitious work. Flawed as it is, it does highlight the complexity of contemporary bioethics in an interesting and novel way. Since this is precisely what Macklin set out to do, the book must be counted a success.

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Shrader-Frechette, K. S., and McCoy, E. D. *Method in Ecology: Strategies for Conservation*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993. Pp. ix + 328. \$69.95 (cloth); \$29.95 (paper).

Like the small boy whose job it was to plug the hole in the dike and hold back the floodwaters, ecology is a weak science that seems to bear the weight of the world. We expect ecologists to save the spotted owl and the Florida panther and, indeed, all of biodiversity. Some ecologists take on this task gladly: they speak as if they have been specially ordained to save God's nature. Ecologists have discovered no laws of nature, and even their various generalizations, some of which have influenced law and policy, have often turned out to be not very general after all, or even false. Seen through the lens of the logical empiricists, ecology is a poor excuse for a science. Not only are laws of nature nowhere to be found, but hypothetico-deductive reasoning is also scarce.