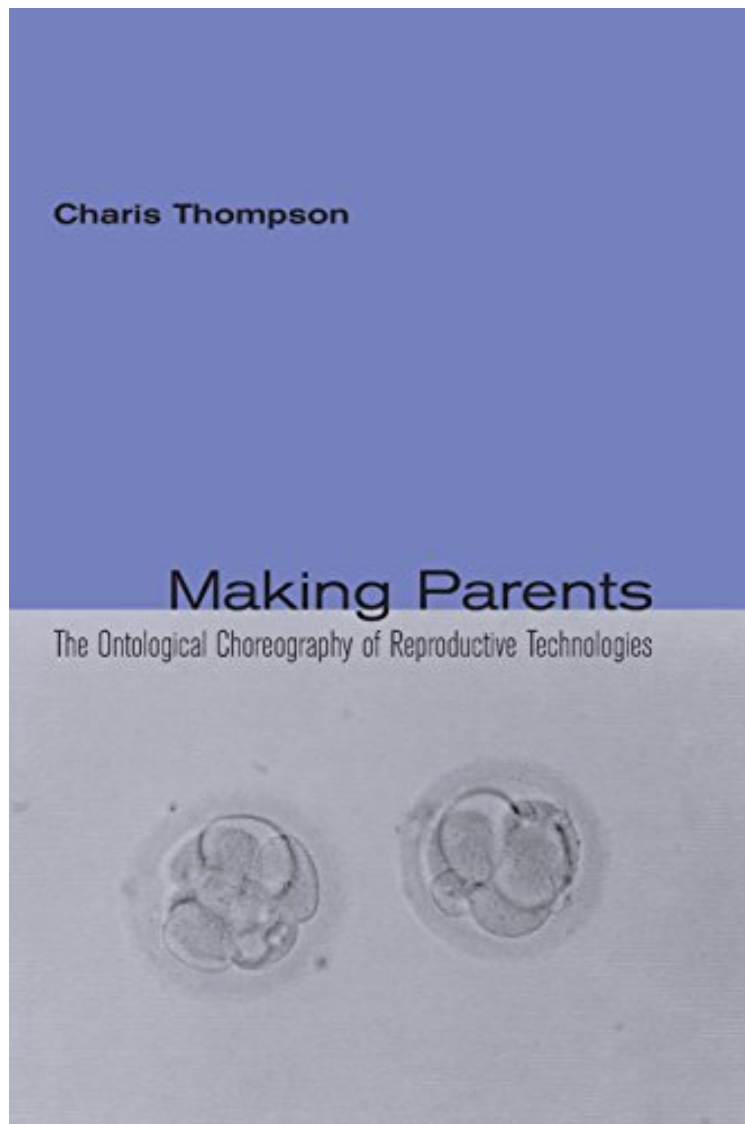


(Download pdf) Making Parents: The Ontological Choreography of Reproductive Technologies (Inside Technology)

# Making Parents: The Ontological Choreography of Reproductive Technologies (Inside Technology)

*Charis Thompson*

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**Charis Thompson : Making Parents: The Ontological Choreography of Reproductive Technologies (Inside Technology)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Making Parents: The Ontological Choreography of Reproductive Technologies (Inside Technology):

Assisted reproductive technology (ART) makes babies and parents at once. Drawing on science and technology studies, feminist theory, and historical and ethnographic analyses of ART clinics, Charis Thompson explores the intertwining of biological reproduction with the personal, political, and technological meanings of reproduction. She analyzes the "ontological choreography" at ART clinics -- the dynamics by which technical, scientific, kinship, gender, emotional, legal, political, financial, and other matters are coordinated -- using ethnographic data to address questions usually treated in the abstract. Reproductive technologies, says Thompson, are part of the increasing tendency to turn social problems into biomedical questions and can be used as a lens through which to see the resulting changes in the relations between science and society. After giving an account of the book's disciplinary roots in science and technology studies and in feminist scholarship on reproduction, Thompson comes to the ethnographic heart of her study. She develops her concept of ontological choreography by examining ART's normalization of "miraculous" technology (including the etiquette of technological sex); gender identity in the assigned roles of mother and father and the conservative nature of gender relations in the clinic; the naturalization of technologically assisted kinship and procreative intent; and patients' pursuit of agency through objectification and technology. Finally, Thompson explores the economies of reproductive technologies, concluding with a speculative and polemical look at the "biomedical mode of reproduction" as a predictor of future relations between science and society.

Charis Thompson's *Making Parents* is an extraordinary account of an extraordinary aspect of our world: the technological, legal, and moral complexities of becoming a parent in the twenty-first century. Throughout, Thompson maintains a wonderful double vision: seeing as a remarkably gifted, scientifically informed ethnographer and watching anxious and hopeful doctors, nurses, and would-be parents with compassion and self-reflection. It is, to be sure, a book that draws deeply on science studies and feminism, but it carries that work to new spaces and in new directions. It is an added and unusual bonus that she delivers the scholarship with grace, humor, and sparkle. (Peter Galison, Mallinckrodt Professor of the History of Science and of Physics, Harvard University) Thompson's 'ontological choreography' underscores the ways in which parents are 'remade' through the processes of assisted reproductive technology, and shows how the very conception of the human is historically recast as a result of these new technological conditions for the reproduction of life. One of this extraordinary book's chief strengths is that it returns a set of abstract debates about ethics, technology, and personhood to specific institutional settings, showing us how such dilemmas emerge and giving them a much-needed historical specificity. This is a wide-ranging, unprecedented, incisive, and brilliant inquiry, probing and provocative, and bound to change the field for years to come. (Judith Butler, Maxine Eliot Professor of Rhetoric and Comparative Literature, University of California, Berkeley, author of *Undoing Gender* and *Precarious Life: The Power of Mourning and Violence*) From the Inside Flap "This is brilliant work! Charis Thompson gives us an innovative masterpiece, rethinking reproduction in an age defined by the promises, processes, and consequences of current and developing technoscientific enmeshments. Standing at the trafficked intersection of brave new technical worlds, anguished individual/familial/gendered yearnings, the odd tensions of consumer responsibility, and the commodification of life itself, Thompson reports back with a stunning range of vision, helping us address the new complexities that constitute reproduction in the West today. This book belongs on everybody's shelves." --Adele E. Clarke, University of California, San Francisco "This book is magisterial in its reach. It will be an extremely significant contribution to our understanding of reproductive technologies, and its commanding writing style matches its ambition. It is a sort of dream book: everything one could expect from an early twenty-first-century work of serious scholarship born out of the last thirty years of debates and reconceptualizations of gender relations, new technologies, ethics, and science." --Marilyn Strathern, Department of Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge "Thompson's 'ontological choreography' underscores the ways in which parents are 'remade' through the processes of assisted reproductive technology, and shows how the very conception of the human is historically recast as a result of these new technological conditions for the reproduction of life. One of this extraordinary book's chief strengths is that it returns a set of abstract debates about ethics, technology, and personhood to specific institutional settings, showing us how such dilemmas emerge and giving them a much-needed historical specificity. This is a wide-ranging, unprecedented, incisive, and brilliant inquiry, probing and provocative, and bound to change the field for years to come." --Judith Butler, author of *Undoing Gender* and *Precarious Life: The Power of Mourning and Violence* "Charis Thompson's *Making Parents* is an extraordinary account of an extraordinary aspect of our world: the technological, legal, and moral complexities of becoming a parent in the twenty-first century. Throughout, Thompson maintains a wonderful double vision: seeing as a remarkably gifted, scientifically informed ethnographer and watching anxious and hopeful doctors, nurses, and would-be parents with compassion and self-reflection. It is, to be sure, a book that draws deeply on science studies and feminism, but it carries that work to new spaces and in new directions. It is an added and unusual bonus that she delivers the scholarship with grace, humor, and sparkle." --Peter Galison, Mallinckrodt Professor of the History of Science and of Physics, Harvard University About the Author Charis Thompson is Associate Professor of Rhetoric and Women's Studies at the University of California, Berkeley.