**Book Special and Press Release:**

**The Dark side of the Womb by Joan Raphael -Leff is available on promotion** for £20 from Karnacbooks.com and is **now on special from** **WCAIMH, locally ,for R250- email** [**jeaninebeukes@tellkomsa.net-**](mailto:jeaninebeukes@tellkomsa.net-)strictly on first come, first receive basis.

This book starts off by providing evidence of how a baby first develops a sense of him or herself. Raphael-Leff demonstrates that the way that a baby’s ‘self’ is formed depends heavily on the ability of the parents to reflect, communicate and make sense of their baby’s experiences during those crucial first two years*. “The child’s mind develops through the mind of his or her carer,”* says Raphael-Leff. *“Together, parents and their babies create shared meanings.”*

Professor Joan Raphael-Leff, the psychoanalyst whose theories about motherhood were popularised in Oliver James’ bestselling book *‘How Not to F\*\*k Them Up’* (2010) released her 12th book on the emotional turmoil of mothers and fathers during the 1001 days between conception and the child’s second birthday.

In this book, which came out in January 2015, Raphael-Leff aims to answer questions like:

* How do your own experiences of being parented affect the way you parent your own children?
* How does the way you feel about pregnancy prime the way you treat your baby after birth?
* How does the experience of being a parent help you to understand and overcome the darkest and most painful experiences of your own childhood?

Controversially, *The Dark Side of the Womb* also homes in on areas of ‘darkness’ in the minds of new parents, sparked both by the intense experiences of pregnancy and birth, and by their attempts to read the preverbal emotions of their newborn baby. Raphael-Leff uses her clinical experience to show how parents become vulnerable when the dark, unprocessed issues of their own childhood and infancy are reawakened through the exhausting demands of babycare and exposure to primal substances of poop, pee, breastmilk, etc.

*“These reactivated feelings interfere with parenting, arousing feelings of doubt, anxiety, guilt, rage and insecurity, which lead some parents to search desperately for parenting guidance, while others benefit from brief parent-infant psychotherapy.”*

With this book, Raphael-Leff hopes to offer parents insights into their own feelings - for instance, exploring the way that pregnancy takes hospitality to its absolute extreme: *“Two people actually reside in one body, sharing a two-way system. The fetus feeds off the hostess, making competitive life and death demands on her resources while spewing out waste products for dispersal through her system. She may respond by idealistically cherishing or realistically enjoying the baby-to-be; she may endure their coexistence or resist the ‘parasitic invader’, even aborting the ‘persecutor’ when a sense of exploitation is too much. Whatever her response, her particular maternal ‘orientation’ towards her baby in pregnancy foreshadows their future face-to-face interaction.”*

Similarly, *The Dark Side of the Womb* looks at how gender is constituted in society, and the pressure on women to replicate the womb’s functions of placental processing and containment. Often seen by both sexes as a ‘paradise lost’, this imaginary womb is then thrown into contrast with real-life accounts from pregnant women and new mothers, who perceive the babies they carry as “body snatchers” and “mind invaders”. Similarly, the fantasies, wishes, even hormonal changes of expectant and new fathers are frankly discussed in the book, along with the anxious responses of siblings to a new baby.

*“The central message of The Dark Side of the Womb is that something new and different can flourish even in people who themselves had insecure attachments and/or traumatic events in their own childhoods. Whatever their past, if they are able to use parenting to process their feelings and evolve a coherent understanding of their own experiences of being parented - however painful it was - they can evolve greater self-confidence, and promote security and empathy in their children.”*

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To contact Professor Raphael-Leff for an interview or photograph, please email: jrleff@gmail.com