



CFP from Demeter Press

Motherloss

Jacqueline Kolosov, Ketoki Mazumdar, Liana DiMarco

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Published in 1994, American writer Hope Edelman published the pioneering *Motherless Daughters: The Legacy of Loss*, which explores the impact of the premature loss of a mother on a woman's life, citing higher incidences of depression, self-harm, addiction, and even suicide. Six years later, sociologist Lynn Davidman's *Motherloss* brings together her own experience of her mother's death from cancer when she was 13—and harnesses her expertise as a sociologist and ethnographer, further focusing on the “biographical disruption” to an individual's personal development that the mother's death brings and the processes by which they make sense of and reconfigure their lives.

One important trope of motherloss to this project is the nurturing, idealized image of the mother within Western societies, an image that becomes further complicated when a mother is a given and therefore taken for granted. Those who grow up without a mother, then, seem to go against the natural order. Inevitably, then, when a child loses a mother, he or she must deal with personal loss as well as the loss of the cultural ideal of the “normal” family even as configurations of the family continue to alter in the 21st century. Even more problematic is the fact that most Western societies devalue or at least silence the process of grieving, making the loss even more difficult to process as the child must learn to downplay and even hide the impact of the mother's death. An anthology centered on Motherloss must therefore come to terms with the images society constructs for mothers and the roles they must fulfill, even as it speaks to the legacy of their loss.

We aim to curate an interdisciplinary anthology centered on the loss of the mother at various points in the lifespan among male, female, and transgender children, taking into account the distinctions between as well as the affinities among diverse populations such as indigenous people, immigrants and their children, refugees, and those from different religious, ethnic, and economic backgrounds. A central goal of the anthology is to bring into being an anthology that is as globally-inclusive as possible, incorporating submissions from outside of North America. We encourage submissions from a wide range of disciplines and fields including psychology, sociology, women and gender studies, literary studies, film studies, cultural studies, law and legal studies, anthropology, other areas within the social sciences and humanities. We also strongly encourage creative contributions such as fiction, creative

non-fiction including personal essay and memoir, and poetry, as well as visual art, photography, and hybrid forms.

Possible topics for exploration are not limited to but may include:

- The ways in which the loss of the mother is incorporated into the sense of self, and the benefits of narrative in developing an understanding of grief;
- Adolescent needs to connect to and relate to other women, which research emphasizes as especially important among female children;
- The way unexpressed grief (from childhood loss) carries forward into adulthood and how this impacts relationships, including a woman's own ability to mother or a man's ability to father/parent;
- Bereavement's role in increasing the vulnerability of a young person and impairing development; and conversely, the way it may provide a greater sense of maturity;
- The "biographical imperative," or the roles of stories in helping add to and sustain the mother's image across time within the individual, the family, and even the wider community;
- Exploring the loss of mother through the lens of polymaternalism – an antidote to the idea of a child having only one 'real' mother and how does an individual locate their ideas of a mother in someone else after the loss of their own biological mother.
- The lack of mothers in literature (Jane Austen, for example) and visual texts;
- The devaluing of mothers and often the elimination of mothers in dystopian literature such as Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*;
- Missing or dead mothers in fairy and folk tales and in animated Disney films;
- The way in which a mother's work is devalued and even erased through her death or annihilation;
- Representations of the dead mother in visual art and in film;
- Early 21st century films that marginalized motherhood to valorize fatherhood;
- The many functions of the dead mother on screen;

- Learned behaviors—for example, a child who witnessed the death of her ill mother, who at the time of her mother was in an abusive relationship, may enter into a similar pattern in adulthood;

Abstracts should be between 400-500 words written in English, using Microsoft Word format, Times New Roman, 12 point font. Authors of accepted proposals will be notified and sent submission guidelines. Chapter contributions will be 4000-7000 words excluding figures, tables, and references, as well as graphics. 1. Abstract submission deadline: April 8, 2024 2. Notification of acceptance: May 15, 2024 3. Full 1st draft of chapter due: December 1, 2024 4. Editorial review results returned: February 1, 2025; 5. Final chapter submission: June 1, 2025; 7. Projected publication date – late 2025-early 2026. Inquiries and submissions: [Motherloss@gmail.com](mailto:Motherloss@gmail.com).