



Vital Signs: Nature, Culture, Psychoanalysis

By Charles Shepherdson

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Editorial Review

Review

"Immensely intelligent and erudite, the book presents its provocative arguments in a very lucid and accessible manner without compromising for a moment the intellectual complexity of the issues involved. Written with clarity and precision, it does not offer a new dogmatic position, but on the contrary, reopens the debate over the embodiment, sexuality, and history in a provocative and original manner, forcing us to rethink the familiar categories and modes of argumentation. As such, it is a welcome and important contribution to psychoanalysis and feminism alike."

-Ewa Plonowska Ziarek, "Hypatia

"Shepherdson tackles some of the most difficult and pressing problems in psychoanalysis and feminism in recent years. Perhaps more than any other current theorist, he shows us that the distinction between culture and nature is neither to be refused nor taken for granted. Through a close and brilliant analysis of the body, sexual difference, the symptom, and fantasy, he radicalizes the thesis of the bodily ego, and makes us all rethink the psychic meanings that biology may assume. Although no one will agree with every word, everyone will be provoked and made smarter by reading this most erudite and lucid text."

-Judith Butler, author of "Gender Trouble

"This book is a revolutionary examination of French feminism. Shepherdson uncovers in the works he studies a much more powerful tradition than the one we have generally accepted. What distinguishes his readings is their conviction--and pellucid demonstration--of psychoanalysis's refusal to cede sex and the body either to nature or to culture. This allows him to construct for French feminism a richer history, into which he introduces several lesser-known thinkers, a clear clinical dimension, and a wholly new theoretical purchase. "Vital Signs sets a new standard for psychoanalytic feminism."

-Joan Copjec, author of "Read My Desire: Lacan Against the Historicists

"Charles Shepherdson brilliantly illuminates the theoretical specificity of psychoanalysis as a unique knowledge base, focusing on topics of particular interest within feminist theory and clinical discourse. With unswerving intellectual vitality, Shepherdson argues against the prevalent dichotomies and anachronisms that have plagued the American debate on psychoanalysis. With "Vital Signs we are offered an opportunity to become familiar with the significant but often misunderstood contributions of our continental colleagues--Lacan and Foucault, but especially Kristeva, Irigaray, Lemoine-Luccioni, and Millot--and in a highly accessible manner."

-Leo Goldberger, editor of "Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Thought

"A glance at the endorsements of Shepherdson's "Vital Signs immediately affirms the significance of this book....After reading Shepherdson's book, it became clear that such striking endorsements were no exaggeration."

-Janet L. Lucas, "Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society, Spring 2003

About the Author

Charles Shepherdson was recently Assistant Professor of English at the University of Missouri, Columbia. He is currently a visiting scholar at the Institute for Advanced Study. He holds a PhD in English from Vanderbilt and has published a number of essays and book chapters.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Kathryn Robinson:

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