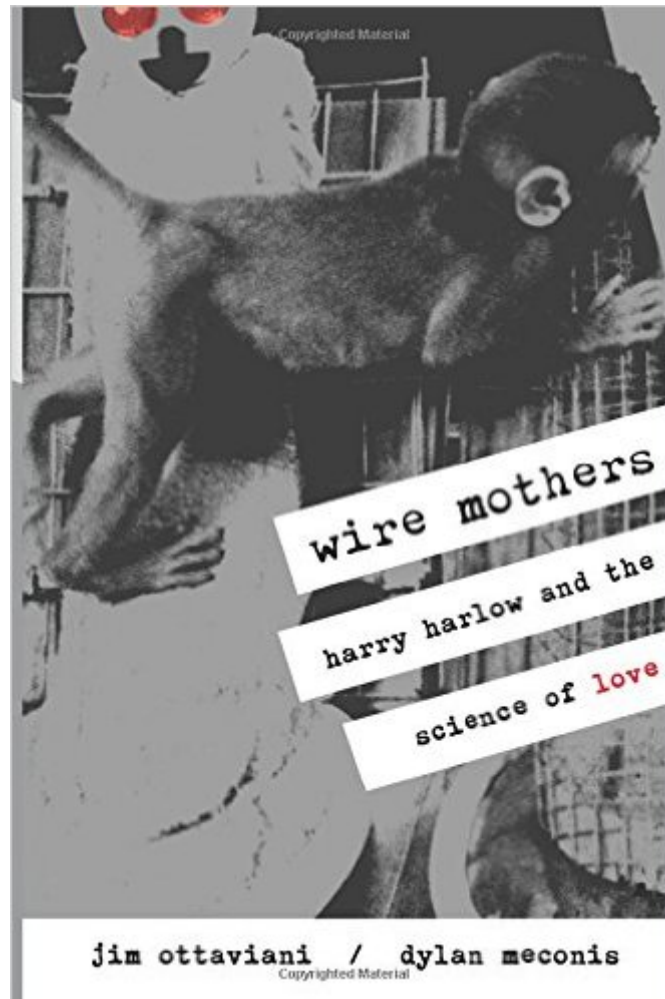


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Wire Mothers: Harry Harlow And The Science Of Love



Synopsis

Psychologists know best, of course, and in the 1950s they warned parents about the dangers of too much love. Besides, what was love anyway? Just a convenient name for children seeking food and adults seeking sex. It took an outsider scientist to challenge it. When Harry Harlow began his experiments on mother love he was more than just an outside the mainstream, though. He was a deeply unhappy man who knew in his gut the truth about what love " and its absence " meant, and set about to prove it. His experiments and results shocked the world, and *Wire Mothers & Inanimate Arms* will shock you as well.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I really don't understand the hugely negative reviews for this. It's based on extensive research, as I would expect from Ottaviani, including Harlow's own autobiography in both published and unpublished forms. 'Wire Mothers' takes you through a tour of Harry Harlow's lab just before the famous CBS 'Mother Love' episode of 'Conquest'. At this time, B.F. Skinner's operant conditioning theory was king - everything and everyone was a black box, to the point that you don't even really comprehend or understand the words you are uttering - you are just regurgitating patterns you were trained in as a child. Love or affection were meaningless, because such concepts are null concepts to mindless automatons. It was the prevailing climate of the day, as strange as it sounds now. Harry Harlow thought this was ridiculous, so he engaged in a series of now painful to contemplate experiments with baby rhesus monkeys where he provided them with wire 'mothers' with bottles

(food) and wire mothers with plush carpet skins (affection) or raised them with no mothers whatsoever, then subjected them to various stresses to see how they'd react. As the afterword says, this is cruel, but someone 'had' to do it and by the standards of the day it was no worse than subjecting minerals to acids. I really thought this was quite sympathetic to Harlow. He's pictured here as a nuanced, conflicted, but principled David who beat down the B.F. Skinner Goliath of the day with a simple, yet utterly compelling series of experiments. The presentation is clever, the art is appropriately realistic yet stylized. It portrays him as a very (likeable) human being, which I guess isn't acceptable to people who need everything to be in broad swathes of good/evil white/black paragon/fiend.

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