

accumulated over 30 years: “In labor you swim with contractions that are like tidal waves sweeping through your body. As you push the baby down, you know the intensity of the birth passion, and then reach out with eager hands to welcome your baby and cradle this new life in your arms. To see love made flesh is to witness a miracle.” Phrases like “tidal waves,” “birth passion,” “love made flesh” flood the reader with elemental energy, instilling a desire to know such moments and lessening fear. The beautiful photographs visually corroborate her language of birth. Kitzinger describes the iatrogenic (physician induced disease or damage) consequences of common obstetrical interventions and of newborn care in hospitals, and the estrangement from “the spontaneous psychobiological processes of birth and the creative energy pouring through [women’s] bodies.” She provides abundant information on arranging a birth without a hospital, finding a midwife, choosing the right birth partner(s), meeting birth challenges in nonmedical ways, and planning the “babymoon.” As Kitzinger states, in a “society that is hostile to freedom in childbirth,” it takes “courage to resist autocracy, dogma and the power of the medical system.” Her words act like a tonic, invigorating women to find strength within themselves; this is the book’s greatest act of midwifery.

## **Pregnant Pictures**

Matthews, Sandra, and Laura Wexler.  
New York: Routledge, 2000.

### **Reviewed by Lisa M. Mitchell**

In their introduction to *Pregnant Pictures*, Sandra Matthews and Laura Wexler ask an interesting and provocative question: “What is a photograph of pregnancy anyway?” (xi). For North Americans the conventional response includes pictures of women serene and glowing in a naturalized state, headless pregnant torsos in guides to pregnancy, and increasingly, images of the fetus. Matthews and Wexler’s many photographs, with their accompanying analysis, provide a compelling framework for readers to move beyond the conventional responses and to think critically about how we look at and interpret visual representations of pregnancy.

Matthews and Wexler’s analysis is framed in terms of different modes of looking—scopic, instrumental, clinical, and iconic—each with distinctive and changing implications for the production and consumption of images. Readers who are unfamiliar with visual theory may wish that the introductory chapter was a less dense, more accessible pathway into the subsequent analysis of the images. Mindful that looking occurs within particular contexts, the analysis nonetheless deftly links the act of viewing to changing attitudes about preg-

nancy and the maternal figure, diverse representations of female subjectivity, and social conflicts over reproduction.

The more than 200 photographs in the book are drawn primarily from art, advertising, family albums, medical textbooks, and public policy material in the United States since World War II. While there already are numerous analyses of obstetrical representations of pregnancy, women, and the fetus, *Pregnant Pictures* manages to offer a fresh reading of medical images by suggesting disturbing eugenicist connotations. Matthews and Wexler move onto less traveled terrain in their analyses of maternity clothing advertisements, their discussion of humour, athleticism, and eroticism in family snapshots of pregnancy, and in their argument about the simultaneous desire for and anxiety about the pregnant figure in popular media. Readers of this *Journal* will be interested particularly in their discussions of the instrumental uses of pregnancy and motherhood in public policy, visual representations of single mothers and working mothers, and modernist visual conventions of desexualized motherhood.

In the social and historical context in which pregnancy so often is equated with producing and nurturing fetuses, reclaiming and embracing images of women during pregnancy is important cultural and political work. Yet, the authors manage to avoid fetishizing their subject, acknowledging that “many a pregnant woman already feels enough like a spectacle and would just as soon not be further featured in the feminine visual position of to-be-looked-at-ness” (14-15). The book is a welcome visual companion to the growing number of text- and narrative-based analyses of the politics of reproduction and of the diverse subject positions of women in pregnancy and motherhood. *Pregnant Pictures* will be appreciated by researchers, students, and others interested in motherhood, reproduction, the life cycle, gender, visual studies, and the body.

## **Birth Passages: Maternity and Nostalgia, Antiquity to Shakespeare**

Krier, Theresa M.  
Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001.

### **Reviewed by Jill Scott**

In *Birth Passages*, Theresa Krier writes against the grain of much contemporary critical analysis of the role of mothers and mothering in literature. Feminist psychoanalysis in particular has given voice to a larger cultural obsession with nostalgia for the lost mother, which in turn manifests itself as an insatiable desire for the return to the bliss of maternal, pre-oedipal one-