

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-

ness. This bliss, argues Krier, is a false one, and the predominance of this cultural myth necessitates a historical re-examination beginning in the cradle of Western civilization with antiquity's own mothers. Krier extends her argument in thematically linked chapters right through the Middle Ages to Elizabethan England (including works from Lucretius, Chaucer, Spencer, and Shakespeare). Through her insightful and subtle readings of central canonical texts from a broad range of periods and genres, she allows her authors to argue her points for her: namely that there are alternative views on motherhood. Rather than privileging the prenatal mother-child bond to the detriment of all subsequent stages of infant and childhood development, Krier demonstrates that mother and child engage in complex negotiations of distance and proximity.

Krier cites Luce Irigaray as her most potent inspiration and her readings of this theorist's work are both illuminating and challenging. As part of her sophisticated theoretical apparatus, Krier takes the unconventional approach of weaving together the French and British traditions of psychoanalysis, schools of thought which have for the most part been considered separate and even antagonistic intellectual pursuits. The dialogue that she instigates among Klein, Winnicott and Irigaray brings new insight to the lesser known contributions of British psychoanalysis.

Krier is clearly at her best when tackling Shakespeare. The concluding chapter on *The Winter's Tale* contains fire, wit, and courage as the author brings her arguments to a theatrical climax with her reading of one of Shakespeare's most controversial and challenging dramas. She admits that the play was the inspiration for this book and is at her scholarly best in her critique of it. Here, she takes careful aim at the concept of the "good enough" mother and succeeds in skillfully dispelling the myth of the "bad mother" syndrome. One of the undeniable strengths of Krier's work, which contributes to her convincing argument, is the time and space she allots to extended literary interpretations. She avoids quoting too many literary examples to support her sustained critique of a central axis of psychoanalytic theory, and instead has the patience to coax her thesis out of each text in lengthy and thoughtful analysis.

There are few flaws in Krier's theoretical and literary musings, however her arguments and her prose are occasionally more dense and hermetic than this reader would have liked. At times, I felt I almost had lost the thread of the subtle web she attempts to weave. Though I always found my way again, a few more signposts would have clarified where I was on her clever map. Reading Krier's serious and intellectually engaging tome while awaiting the birth of my own second child, I constantly was reminded and surprised by the richness that the opportunity of motherhood unveils. Her erudition and astuteness as a literary scholar and as a theoretician are clearly established in *Birth Passages*. Mostly, however, we are left convinced by Krier's sincere and infectious passion and enthusiasm for her deserving topic.