Dara Rossman Regaignon. *Writing Maternity: Medicine, Anxiety, Rhetoric, and Genre.* Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2021. 204 pp. $69.94, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8142-1469-5.

Reviewed by Amber Gill (Mississippi State University)

In *Writing Maternity: Medicine, Anxiety, Rhetoric, and Genre*, Dara Rossman Regaignon examines nineteenth-century maternal anxiety through a literary-rhetorical lens and historicizes a significant shift in motherhood responsibility and stress as being directly connected to the rise of capitalism. The book is impressively succinct, packing a carefully nuanced study of the rhetorical effect of various literary genres (childrearing advice literature, memoir, and popular fiction) on maternal emotion in Victorian-era Britain. Indeed these texts directly influence the actions of mothers, but Regaignon clarifies that she is most concerned with how the literature "shaped how motherhood was imagined and its consequent emotional horizons" (p. 22). Further, the most provoking aspect of her study is the overarching argument that "maternal anxiety is an essential, affective component of patriarchal capitalism" (p. 3).

The first chapter works as the book's introduction by defining terms, outlining the study's complex theoretical frameworks, and briefly summarizing each chapter's claims. Regaignon draws on the work of Sigmund Freud and Søren Kierkegaard to establish a psychoanalytic and philosophical understanding of anxiety. She defines anxiety as both an anticipatory emotion and one of recollection. She also clarifies that her use of the term *rhetoric* follows a more contemporary understanding of it as a "form of symbolic action" (p. 4). Moreover, she establishes that what became understood as nurturing motherhood by the eighteenth century is composed of both a structure of emotion/feeling and ideology. The idealization of motherhood defined women into the nineteenth century and contributed to a "broader set of transformations of the family that are largely associated with the rise of the middle class and capitalist patriarchy" (p. 11).

Throughout the book, Regaignon focuses on both the temporal and spatial dimensions of maternal anxiety. In chapter 2, her examination of medical and childrearing advice literature illuminates how the genre works to isolate mothers and suggest maternal ignorance. Additionally, the genre supports the logic that maternal care "establishes the lifelong bodily, moral, and intellectual trajectory of the child." This rhetoric aids in creating a temporal meaning of the child "that underwrites reproductive futurism" (p. 57). Therefore, childrearing advice literature presents a process of anxious decision-making where the outcome is vital to a successful future of the child, family, and even the nation.

Regaignon continues to explore the temporality of maternal anxiety in chapter 3 by assessing the fear of premature child death. Her study examines advice literature's "consistently invoked exigency, the dire possibility [of death] that shapes the rhetorical situation" (p. 66). She also convincingly shows how this temporal anxiety of the possibility of child death is illustrated in fictional literature, such as Charles Dickens's *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840-41) and the "serialized deferral" of little Nell's death (p. 68). The sequencing of the story, and the resulting anxious waiting, mirror the emotional impact and the maternal anxiety of possible, or in some cases probable, child death. According to Regaignon, "Advice literature's probabilistic expectation of child death cultivates statistical stress as a feature of maternal reading, while the serialized anticipation of a fictional child's death transmutes that stress into an anxious temporality and normalizing axis of identification" (p. 91).

Chapters 4 and 5 explore the spatial dimensions of maternal care anxiety through the control relationship between mothers and alternate caregivers and the introduced fear of infant doping. Paid childcare created an "ideological collision" for middle-class mothers (p. 96). The social obligation of household hierarchy that included servant-keeping was at odds with a mother's understanding of the cultural form of nurturing motherhood. Managing this conflict became part of the mother's responsibility. Although the introduction of paid childcare to middle-class families meant mothering out-of-sight and a new layer to maternal anxieties, Regaignon argues that "*non*-maternal childcare [was] both superfluous and essential, supplementing a self-sufficient middle-class nuclear family that cannot reproduce itself without an instrumental subaltern presence" (p. 96). Moreover, the increased fear that paid caregivers were secretly giving children opium, perpetuated through advice literature warnings, contributed to growing maternal anxiety: "opium warnings bind together the temporal anxiety of

child death and the supervisory anxiety of paid childcare, mobilizing those narrative patterns and social hierarchies to generate a context in which managerial motherhood is premised upon the impossibility of adequate supervision" (p. 128)

Writing Maternity is a great contribution to the growing interest in and interdisciplinary nature of motherhood studies. Compellingly, Regaignon's study aids in illuminating a direct connection between mothering, class, and nation-building. She positions modern maternal anxiety as being catalyzed by the idea of the "current well-being and future of the Child as the figure of the nation," and she argues that "female attention of the domestic sphere [is] the vulnerable center of the current and future nation" (p. 13). Although the book focuses only on Britain, it provides an important basis for thinking about the part women have played and continue to play in the development of nations (not just symbolically) and the psychological impacts of that role.

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