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BOOK REVIEW

Homeland Maternity: US Security Culture and the New Reproductive Regime

Natalie Fixmer-Oraiz. Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2019 (ISBN 978-0-252-94235-5)

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Natalie Fixmer-Oraiz's *Homeland Maternity* is part of a growing literature discussing *the politics of* maternal politics—that is, how maternalism is presented, manipulated, and policed toward particular ends by the contemporary nation-state. As Fixmer-Oraiz explains, across the examples detailed in *Homeland Maternity*, "pregnancy and motherhood are intimately entwined with the nation, its recent investments, and dominant logics" (3). Those investments and logics can be summed up, in Fixmer-Oraiz's view, in the term *homeland maternity*, "the relationship between motherhood and nation within homeland security culture" (3). In *homeland maternity*, "rather than existing as a kind of biological tie, motherhood is articulated as social status and cultural designation—an identity figured as the pinnacle expression of wealthy, white, idealized femininity" (134).

The book is easily read and accessed across a wide variety of social-science disciplines and avoids the highly technical jargon that often makes the intersection between contributions to feminist philosophy and books that might reach a small nonacademic audience. It uses appropriate, timely, and engaging examples to make complex arguments feel fairly straightforward. With very little repetition and a relatively short text, Fixmer-Oraiz provides a detailed and compelling account of twenty-first-century American motherhood as gendered, raced, classed, and nationalized. The author suggests three main takeaways from the text, explicitly laid out in the conclusion: homeland maternity produces discourses that mask reproductive stratification and injustice (145), intensifies surveillance and policing of women's lives (147), and betrays the distance between contemporary practice and reproductive dignity and justice (149). All three arguments span the well-organized text.

In the introduction, Fixmer-Oraiz begins by explaining that "alignments between motherhood and nation are not new" (5), tracing "strict regulation of reproduction" to the United States' early state-formation in a way that engaged in "codifying white supremacy at the founding of the new republic" (5). On top of regulation of reproduction, *Homeland Maternity* tells of a history of reproductive abuse, sexual and reproductive violence, and the regulation of reproductive labor "within the project of nation-building" in the United States (7–8). In the introduction and throughout the

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book, I find myself wondering what the unspoken opposite of the "homeland" is—that is, Fixmer-Oraiz links nationalism to wealthy, white, feminized motherhood without anything but passing reference to the constitutive others who may be at the other end of that, and/or similar processes working in other places and cultures around the world. Elsewhere, feminist scholars have noted the influence of "the twin processes of heterosexualization and patriarchy" (Peterson 2013, 65, n. 1) and repronormativity (Weissman 2017) to bear on the question of how states constitute motherhood (Hall, Weissman, and Shepherd 2020). As Weissman explains, there is a cycle of "legitimized, state-sanctioned heteronormative acts of reproduction specifically through the patriarchal, heteronormative family, and service to this reproduction of the heteropatriarchal nation-state" (Weissman 2017, 279). In this analysis, *homeland maternity* might be an adaptation of, or change to, the relationship between gender, reproduction, and the state. Still, the general dynamics are not only "not new" to the United States *now*, they are not unique to the United States *or* to now. Situating the book more firmly in the existing literature about national-security maternalism would make the work of this book on the contemporary American political context even stronger.

Four empirical chapters focus on four trends in the shaping and enforcement of the concept and practice of motherhood in "homeland security culture." Chapter 1, "Securing Motherhood on the Home Front," discusses the "opt-out revolution" (35) paired with a new emphasis on fertility preservation in the form of egg-freezing (45). As Fixmer-Oraiz explains, the opt-out narrative ("opting out" of the workplace to be a full-time mother) presents a narrow demographic of motherhood with little data behind it, all the while betraying the unfriendliness of many workplaces and deceptively deploying neoliberal rhetorics of choice (36)—framed as "the most recent evolution in women's empowerment" (39). What this adds up to is a "logic of intensive motherhood" (39) that treats it "as a vehicle for citizenship and security for women of means" (41). This security is both personal and state security—"cast as a means of managing the homefront during times of heightened insecurity" (42–43). Egg-freezing, the author explains, is the flip side of the same coin—where promotion discourses emphasize personal security (you can work "now" and have a family "later") and national security (where women can be in the workforce and still perform their fundamental duty of national reproduction (48). The effect of this pairing is that "motherhood was reanimated as an ideal for a white woman of means" (56). A key strength of this chapter is its attention to race, and the unequivocal nature of its assertion that arguments about whether or not women can "have it all" (Slaughter 2012) are racialized, classed, and situated in the national imaginary conceptions of both femininity and citizenship. Still, at the end of the chapter, as throughout the book at various points, I find myself wanting a clearer link to the national-security implications that are hinted at but not explicitly discussed—what does implicating these parts of reproduction really tell us about what the state is, claims to be, or wants to enforce itself as? Who or what is the state shoring "itself" up against, and what does that constitute "itself" as?

Chapter 2, "Risky Reproduction and the Politics of Octomom," contrasts the initial celebration of the live birth of Nadya Suleman's octuplets with the media firestorm that commenced once her identity was revealed (59). In this chapter, Fixmer-Oraiz shows the ways that "some mothers are publicly venerated as others are maligned and punished"—wealthy, white women's multiple births are celebrated while Suleman's "unruly, reproductive body" was framed as a "threat to be contained through the assertion of medical authority" because "reproductive technologies have never been imagined to benefit just anyone" (60). The coverage of "Octomom," Fixmer-Oraiz reports, is not anomalous, but a part of a larger trend where "pregnant individuals are held relentlessly responsible" for upholding "dominant norms and expectations" (74) such that "culturally legible motherhood remains a privilege of income, class, marital status, race, and other cultural capital" (78). The lens of homeland maternity reveals this often-unseen "reproductive stratification" (78). The evidence for the argument of this chapter is both overwhelming and compelling—the author effectively demonstrates that the treatment of Suleman was notably different based on the life circumstances attributed to her, and frames that well within a larger context of the national attitude toward assistive reproductive technologies (ART) generally, and multiple ART-related births specifically. Although I would have found an explicit link to the discussion of egg-freezing in chapter 1 illuminating, I could easily foresee assigning this chapter independently as a reading in a course as an example of the raced and classed ways in which American society addresses pregnancy and motherhood.

Unlike chapter 2, I found myself rereading chapter 3, "Post-Prevention? Conceptualizing Emergency Contraception," to make sure that I grasped the full argument and was able to relate the presented evidence to that argument. The chapter uses the concept of homeland maternity to analyze debates and misinformation around emergency contraception (EC), suggesting that there is a fundamental tension within debates about EC that the concept of homeland maternity can reveal and elucidate. Paying attention to the "unorthodox reclassification" (86) of emergency contraception as prescription then behind-the-counter with an age limitation, Fixmer-Oraiz notes that "abortion was simultaneously *conflated with* and *disarticulated from* EC" (94). Relating this seeming paradox to anxiety about women's excess sexuality and the popularity of abstinence culture, Fixmer-Oraiz argues that this and other health-care refusals represent and reify "a simultaneous dispersion and intensification of discipline" surrounding pregnancy. Though "good girls" supposedly do not need the "morning after" pill because they could not be imagined to have had a "night before" (98), post-prevention contraception can also be an "opportunity to eclipse fear and distress" of unwanted or improper pregnancy (92). The subject matter of this chapter may be the most relatable to popular readers, but the argument is the most complex: that there are raced, gendered, and classed imaginaries of pregnancy and motherhood in *both* the provision and denial of ECs, which reflect those same dynamics in wider cultural understandings of who can/should mother and what mothering entails.

Chapter 4, "Crisis Pregnancy and the Colonization of the Clinic," explores the role of homeland maternity in what Fixmer-Oraiz calls "crisis pregnancy." The chapter highlights a number of television shows from the early 2000s that shared in common cautionary tales of teenage pregnancy, described as stories of "white teen pregnancy and post-feminist articulations of its proper care and negotiation" (111). Fixmer-Oraiz explains that "young pregnant and parenting women are uniquely governed by and through homeland maternity" (111), highlighting the ways that teen motherhood is an "*untenable paradox*" (123), "deeply stigmatized, racialized in dominant imaginaries, and positioned at the root of myriad problems" (117). In response to this "crisis" of teen pregnancy, in entertainment media and popular culture, "adoption is consistently figured as the only lasting resolution to crisis teen pregnancy" (128), where "the juxtaposition of the pregnant teen and the aspiring adoptive mother clarifies the narrow circumference of motherhood in the context of homeland security culture" (133–34). Fixmer-Oraiz explores the ways that conservative crisis pregnancy intervention weaponizes adoption to deter abortion (135–37) in a way that results in "weakening reproductive rights and colonizing reproductive health clinics" (138). Though the contextualization of the concept of *colonizing* as applied in the chapter could have used some explication, the chapter is a good read with a strong argument. The combination of high-quality textual analysis of the appearance of teen pregnancy in entertainment media and the stark reality of the abuses in many organizations claiming to "aid" pregnant teens is sobering, and not easily forgotten after reading this chapter.

In the conclusion, Fixmer-Oraiz tells readers that it is important to "interrogate cultural logics" of homeland maternity and "their discursive conditions" (150). The conclusion makes several suggestions about how to go about that work, including co-opting and foregrounding motherhood for reproductive justice (153), disrupting the dominant codes of reproductivity (154), and queering motherhood with "alternative modes of crafting kin" (159). *Homeland Maternity* concludes by noting the "deep and expansive footprint" of the book's titular concept, suggesting to the reader that "the possibilities of reproductive justice rely on our capacity to dream other ways of relating into existence" (159). In my view, the conclusion is at once the weakest and the most interesting part of *Homeland Maternity*. The conclusion shows weakness in its assertion of the possibility and desirability of reproductive justice without a clear definition or set of criteria about what might constitute that justice. It is a normative conclusion to a book that is not explicitly normative until the conclusion, and that awkwardness is felt in the reading. That said, I think it is the most interesting part for two reasons: first, because the normative conclusion, however vague, *resonates*—I did just read a hundred and fifty pages of terrible, unjustified, and unjustifiable reproductive *injustice*, and it does need to be corrected. The power with which the injustice is described across the book—even when (and perhaps especially when) it is not labeled injustice—is what makes this book such a great read for general interest readers, students, and scholars alike. By the time I get to the conclusion, then, as a reader, I *want* to fix these problems, and the conclusion offers me a view of the possibility that solutions might be available. The second reason the conclusion is interesting is that the text's discussion of co-optation, disruption, and queering of motherhood, however short, is both smart and fascinating. As I finished the conclusion, I eagerly awaited Fixmer-Oraiz's next article or book expanding on these ideas.

In sum, the book is timely and makes an important argument about gender, race, class, and nationalism that is a real contribution to the study of gender in the United States political landscape, with possible broader implications. Its politics are spot-on, and it is readable and interesting, such that it could be suggested even to those outside of academia. It is also a good classroom text and is likely to be of use to researchers interested in a wide variety of concepts and trends around nationalism and reproduction. It is because I found the text so engaging that I want to push it further to address the Others that constitute the homeland and homeland maternity, the relationships between American *homeland maternity* and its kin abroad, and the complicated, normative construction that is reproductive justice. In my view, those contextualizations would make a good book great.

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