

Book Reviews

While the study of Harvey's natural philosophy, in particular the analysis of the anatomy lectures and of *De motu cordis*, is insightful and persuasive, the section devoted to philosophy teaching in Cambridge when Harvey was a student is somewhat cursory and it is not clear why French decided to base his investigation on John Case's *Ancilla*, which was published in 1599—when Harvey had already moved to Padua—and on Magirus's textbook, which appeared in 1608.

The book is handsomely illustrated with an intelligent choice of images, but unfortunately it is marred by some irksome mistakes in the spelling of Latin and Greek titles. Although *William Harvey's natural philosophy* does not deal with Harvey's theory of generation, it stands out as a major contribution to the understanding of William Harvey and his rôle in seventeenth-century medicine and natural philosophy.

Antonio Clericuzio, Università di Cassino

Katherine Arnup, *Education for motherhood: advice for mothers in twentieth-century Canada*, University of Toronto Press, 1994, pp. xiii, 251, illus., UK £32.00, USA \$50.00, Europe \$60.00 (hardback 0-8020-2861-6), UK £12.00, USA \$18.95, Europe \$23.00 (paperback 0-8020-7361-1).

Inspired by the birth of her first child and the frustration of the vast amount of “expert” child-rearing advice she was relying upon, Katherine Arnup began to question the sources and validity of twentieth-century baby care advice manuals during her PhD training as a social historian. Her book, *Education for motherhood*, attempts to situate Canadian child-rearing advice as it appeared in popular form between 1900 and 1960, in its proper historical context. The book's central thesis echoes the work of historians Rima Apple, Richard Meckel, and Nancy Pottishman Weiss, among others, as it describes child-rearing advice more as a social construct of opinion on gender, class, and society, than as an “exact science”.

Relying primarily upon advice books, pamphlets, films, radio scripts and a series of oral histories with eleven Canadian mothers who used these materials during the years' studies. Dr Arnup notes that there are many historiographical problems in using advice books as historical documents. For example, who actually read these baby care books as opposed to simply putting them on a convenient shelf?; Was the advice actually followed?; How did these advice books change child rearing practices? Citing the work of social historian Jay Mechling, she correctly notes what many paediatricians have known for years: “there is no persuasive evidence that the official advice affects the parent's behavior” (p. 123). Nevertheless, the historical documentation Arnup provides to assess the impact of child-care advice manuals on the daily lives of Canadian mothers is an almost exclusive use of these advice manuals and materials.

The book briefly discusses the rise of infant health as a social and political issue in Canada during the early decades of the twentieth century. The alarming rates of infant and maternal mortality during these years in Canada, as well as in many other industrialized nations of the era, were instrumental in the movement to educate and medicalize motherhood. Arnup does not compare these movements abroad or even below Canada's border in her book. Not surprisingly, however, the advice offered to Canadian mothers during this period bears striking similarities in attitudes and tone to the infant welfare movement in the United States and Great Britain. From Arnup's account, the reader gets little sense that there were any intellectual or philosophical interactions between those Canadians offering the child care advice and other child care experts practising their trade in different national contexts. Subsequent chapters explore the baby care advice materials themselves in order to assess what was being advised and what impact it may have had on the lives of Canadian mothers.

Perhaps most jarring is that a key historical voice is essentially absent in *Education for*

motherhood—the medical practitioners who made their careers as “experts”. Other than the work of Canadian paediatricians Helen MacMurchy and William Blatz in addition to the work of Dr Benjamin Spock (who is not Canadian), little attention is paid to the historically vexing problem of documenting what occurs between mother and paediatrician at a well-child conference during the years studied. When one considers that the dynamics between mother and “expert” are profoundly separated during the reading of a tract on child-care advice, the problem of offering individualized advice becomes much larger. Indeed, the over-used but hardly hegemonic baby care advice adage, “Consult your physician” takes on new meaning when considering that the authors writing the advice are addressing an unknown and unexamined patient and parent.

Howard Markel, University of Michigan

Valerie Fildes, Lara Marks, and Hilary Marland (eds), *Women and children first: international maternal and infant welfare, 1870–1945*, London, Routledge, 1992, pp. xxiii, 311, illus., £45.00 (0-415-08090-8).

This is a worthy, useful and interesting book. It is also a representative example of much of recent social history of medicine, dealing with a topic from different points of view. Its focus is on infant and maternal mortality, which was late in declining compared with adult mortality from infectious disease. The topic is interesting for historical demographers who see it as the last episode in the demographic transition that ushered in longer life-spans for the populations of developed countries. Social and medical historians find that it was a problem which came into consciousness in the early twentieth century and led to a series of welfare, educational and medical measures in different countries and continents. Nearly all the chapters in this book are informative and they range widely from Irvine Loudon’s masterly international comparative study of maternal mortality from

1880 to 1950, which demonstrates that the new sulpha and antibiotic drugs did more than any social measures to reduce maternal mortality, to the specific studies on colonial Burma and Malaya by Judith Richell and Lenore Mederson and on medical missionaries in Johannesburg and on poor rural Afrikaner women by Debby Gaitskell and Marijhe du Toit. The latter studies make significant contributions to the newly flourishing field of the history of colonial medicine, and they indicate that, in the colonial era at least, the awareness of the problem of infant and maternal mortality was brought from the developed countries. Such a western awareness in the colonial context gave plenty of scope for denigration and social stereotyping, as indeed was the case for the poor in Europe and America. Other chapters discuss western reactions in detail, for instance, Cynthia Comacchio demonstrates the force of racial and militaristic notions that underlay the creation of child welfare services in Ontario after the Great War, whilst Milton Lewis on maternal care in Sydney, and Hilary Marland on the medicalization of motherhood in the Netherlands, skilfully unravel the complex ways in which medical politics influenced the various solutions to the problem of mortality amongst mothers.

We have here a volume that provides a multidimensional picture of an issue that appears to have objective (demographic) and subjective (seen at the time) components. It is an undogmatic and empirical approach for which the contributors and the editors should be congratulated, and it advances our understanding of the final phase of the demographic transition in terms both of the mechanics at work and of its geographical extent. Perhaps one might ask of some contributions if there was a different sense implied in the use of statistics in the 1920s than in the 1990s, or whether the very different economic and material culture of the first part of the twentieth century contingently affected the politics of medicine and motherhood. But this is to cavil by introducing historiographical issues that reach beyond this excellent volume.

Andrew Wear, Wellcome Institute