

## Book Reviews

phenomenon. Its greatest contribution is the author's insistence on the existence of "critical periods" in the development of a child. The value of this reprint is enhanced by the appendage of McGraw's lucid 1985 essay 'Professional and personal blunders in child development research'.

Though I can only praise this series, I must air strong reservations over the quality of the forewords. Though they all provide a biographical sketch of the authors, they often fail seriously to place the work in its historical context. It is unfortunate that future students of developmental medicine and historians alike will find in these books very little information about their historical importance. Only T. Berry Brazelton tries to address this issue. This shortcoming is made clear by reading Myrtle B. McGraw's wonderful critical essay, which illustrates how much more might have been added to this collection.

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GEOFFREY RICE, *Black November: the 1918 influenza epidemic in New Zealand*, Wellington, Allen & Unwin and Historical Branch, New Zealand Department of Internal Affairs, 1988, 8vo, pp. ix, 230, NZ \$29.95, (paperback).

In November 1918, while the world rejoiced at a war's end, New Zealanders were still fighting and dying—besieged by the influenza pandemic that had earlier swept the northern hemisphere. In four years, their small nation had given nearly 16,700 lives to the war; now it lost half that number to disease in less than two months. Yet, in New Zealand as elsewhere, the greater ordeal eclipsed the lesser. War-time heroism and sacrifice were proudly remembered, but the humbler tragedy of influenza was buried with its victims. Geoffrey Rice has reconstructed this stark episode, evoking the experience of individuals and communities, and testing it with exhaustive research.

*Black November* begins with a concise survey of "Spanish" influenza's global impact, and consideration of various theories of its origin and diffusion. Next comes an account of its controversial appearance in Auckland; and subsequent chapters follow the epidemic to other cities, then out into country towns and rural hinterland. These make lively reading, as Rice explores political rows, tardy official measures, and valiant relief efforts, recapturing at times vividly the shock and drama of the crisis, the anguish of its aftermath. Two passages stand out: the sensitive essay on a typical country town, and the study of influenza's devastating impact on the Maori population.

The latter part of the book tackles a series of questions: how did influenza enter the country? what were its patterns of diffusion and mortality? which people were most vulnerable, and why? Based on a formidable analysis of death records, several chapters are veritable statistical thickets, in which lurk revelations that warrant clearer statement. The discussion of the S.S. *Niagara* controversy is more accessible, and Rice's hypothesis an intriguing one: that recombination of an existing virus with a "northern variant", borne by whatever vessel, best explains the New Zealand phenomenon. However, this seems to question the "killer" status of the virus that emerged in eastern France, and to suggest that recombination was the universal pattern: the implications of both are not really developed. In any case, the virology of the entire pandemic remains largely speculative; but Rice does convincingly rule out a purely local mutation—by reference to Australia, where influenza's onset was postponed by resolute maritime quarantine. His concluding chapter identifies the significant reforms that the crisis wrought in New Zealand's own health administration.

As the first full-scale study of the pandemic in New Zealand, this book deserved less frugal publication: the photographic record of the period is a sad omission, and a solitary map-diagram in chapter 7 makes an impressive appendix on mortality in towns and counties very much the preserve of "locals". Yet, if New Zealanders have most to gain from *Black November*, it is not the less valuable to historians of medicine in general, for it investigates thoroughly a severe manifestation of a global disaster, and forcefully demonstrates its impact upon all aspects of a nation's life.

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