

Book Reviews

women"? There is material here for a dozen articles and dissertations.

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E M Tansey, D A Christie (eds), *Looking at the unborn: historical aspects of obstetric ultrasound*, Wellcome witnesses to twentieth century medicine, vol. 5, transcript of a Witness Seminar held at the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, London, on 10 March 1998, London, The Wellcome Trust, 2000, pp. v, 80, £5.00, US\$8.00 (paperback 1-841290-11-4).

Thanks to its widespread use in prenatal care, ultrasound is perhaps the most familiar of medicine's diagnostic imaging technologies. Foetal ultrasound scans have found their way into many a family photograph album. The technology has its origins in sonar and radar developed just before and during the Second World War. In the late 1940s and 1950s, various investigators, many inspired by wartime experiences, began to investigate its possible applications in medical diagnosis. The possible applications which they envisaged differed greatly from one to the other. One important programme of work, and the one which was eventually to give rise to specifically obstetric applications of ultrasound, was based in Glasgow. Ian Donald (1910–87) was appointed to the Regius Chair of Midwifery at the University of Glasgow in 1954. Tom Brown (b. 1933) joined the instrument manufacturers Kelvin & Hughes Ltd as a trainee engineer in 1951. The collaboration between these two men, starting in 1956, was central to the development of obstetric ultrasound. Brown, and many others involved in this work from the 1950s onwards, participated in the Witness Seminar convened at the

instigation of the historian Malcolm Nicolson.

The history of diagnostic ultrasound can be told as a tale of simultaneous discovery; as a tale of the technical inspirations of war; as a tale of British scientific success and commercial failure. A Witness Seminar format, of necessity, does not make for a consistent tale. People participated in different ways and choose to emphasize certain of the things they recall. What they share, and perhaps want to share, is a sense of celebration. People assembled to celebrate progress in medical ultrasound; or at least one part of that progress. Two pages (67–8) make clear the underlying conventions at play here. Jean Robinson refers to a long tradition of consumer concern (especially from within the women's movement) regarding the safety and extent of use of ultrasound in ante-natal care. She is put firmly in her place by Stuart Campbell, an eminent obstetrician, and one-time collaborator of Ian Donald: "Professor Robinson's comment . . . is of course nonsense. There is no technique . . . so demanded". Both views are, "of course", correct. Their reconciliation here was not to have been expected.

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Jon Turney, *Frankenstein's footsteps: science, genetics and popular culture*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1998 (hardback), 2000 (paperback), pp. ix, 276, illus., £19.95 (hardback 0-300-07417-4), £11.95 (paperback 0-300-08826-4).

Jon Turney's book is about the triumphant parade of the biological sciences, and the nervously ambivalent reaction of the onlookers lining the streets. He traces the cultural history of images of the science, through the trope of Mary

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Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* of 1818, in which a scientist creates human life, and it turns on him in revenge. The story has been retold over and over through the succeeding two centuries in novels, films, cartoons and newspaper headlines; it has become a myth whose horrors can be evoked in a single word, a name. Turney shows how the myth shaped—or perhaps reflected—public response to mechanistic bioscience. Events from Jacques Loeb's artificially fertilized sea-urchin egg, to the eugenics movement, to the first "test-tube baby" were interpreted through Mary Shelley's imagery as shocking and threatening. One has to add the present campaign against "Frankenfoods" to his list of negative imagery of genetic science.

Turney's image ties together an account of how science looks from outside the profession; it belongs to that more demotic historiography of science that has ceased to privilege science alone, and looks at its public constituency as well. However, his image predisposes him to find fear and loathing in the public sector, set off against a gung-ho enthusiasm from the scientists, most exquisitely shown in the cartoons he has found. But a popular view is not confined only to lay culture. The scientists too live in society: imagery and role-playing may affect their choice of objects, and their projects are subject to political decisions. The gung-ho-ness may be rhetoric aimed at persuading their granting bodies that Frankenstein was a good man after all. It is also possible to find other kinds of response to bioscience: a recent *New York Times* contained a very sympathetic article on two couples' attempts to conceive a child who was a perfect genetic match, in order to supply stem cells to a sibling—a Frankensteinerian problem if ever there was one.¹ Emily Martin, too, who interviewed the citizens of Baltimore about their views of the immune system, found them to be rather sympathetic to the T cells, personified as "Mr T", and his gallant efforts against the HIV virus.² Popular

culture is not homogeneous nor does it see science through a one-way glass.

These reservations are really no more than responses to a delightful book that evokes in a reader the need to answer back. This is one of the reasons it has been put on the syllabus of 'Good Breeding', the Open University's course on the eugenics movement.³ The organizers are sure the students will want to read it, and will want to discuss what they have read.

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¹ Lisa Belkin, 'The made-to-order savior. Two families, two sick children, one revolutionary solution: technology that allows parents to conceive a donor child who is a perfect genetic match', *New York Times Magazine*, July 1, 2001: 36–48; 62–3.

² Emily Martin, *Flexible bodies: tracking immunity in American culture from the days of polio to the age of AIDS*, Boston, MA, Beacon Press, 1994.

³ James Moore, *Good breeding: science and society in a Darwinian age*, Study Guide A426, Milton Keynes, The Open University, 2001.

James F Crow and William F Dove (eds), *Perspectives on genetics: anecdotal, historical, and critical commentaries, 1987–1998*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 2000, pp. 734, £16.95, US\$19.95 (paperback 0-29916604-X).

Crow and Dove launched a new feature in the American journal, *Genetics*, in 1987. As this book's subtitle suggests, the idea was to commission historical essays, commentaries, and reminiscences. This volume reprints the 140 essays that constitute the first twelve years of their feature.

As expected, the range is vast in scope and quality. Reminiscences describe mentors, research groups, and famous congresses. Retiring workers put their