

"Fertility control has always been a culturally dependent category. Accordingly it is impossible to write 'the' history of the patterning of fertility, since the experience of each society has been unique" (p. 5).

McLaren offers little on medical aspects of birth control such as the technology and pharmacology of abortion, or the medical havoc of bungled and septic abortions as a factor in its own right, which women might have taken into consideration in fertility decisions. He also pays little attention to the quantitative findings of the historical demographers, whose ignorance of the cultural matrix of childbearing McLaren deplors. Yet he might have displayed a bit more interest in such work, for in the end McLaren does not satisfactorily account for the gulf between the average family size of six in traditional society and that of one and a half in our own days. In view of such a vast gap, arguments pertaining to technological innovation or the diffusion of information might be of some relevance after all, in addition to the "societal views" with which McLaren clearly feels more comfortable. Some readers may find jarring McLaren's obsequious attentiveness to current dogma about women's oppression and his self-righteous flagellation of males for the beastliness of their gender.

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RENATE BLUMENFELD-KOSINSKI, *Not of woman born: representations of Caesarean birth in medieval and Renaissance culture*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1990, 8vo, pp. x, 204, illus., \$27.95, overseas \$30.75 (0-8014-2292-2).

This book is presented as a cultural history of Caesarean section, based on a wide range of source materials encompassing not only medical, religious and historical texts but also, most importantly, the early iconography of the operation. However, in the course of this study, Caesarean birth comes to be seen as a test case for "the history of gender roles", permitting us to detect changes in the roles of women both as patients and as healers.

Caesarean section is discussed in medical texts only after the early fourteenth century, when it was normally performed after the death of the mother in labour. By the late sixteenth century there was some debate concerning the possibility of both mother and child surviving such an operation. Children whose life came, literally, out of death were, in a sense, "unborn" and thus anomalous. By a process of "creative etymology", largely based on Latin words for "cut" and "thick hair", Julius Caesar came to be associated with such a birth, but so was a world leader yet to come: the Antichrist. The strongest chapters of this book are those in which the author carries out detailed studies of twenty-six illustrations of the birth of Julius Caesar, dating from the late thirteenth century, and of a number of late fifteenth-century German woodcuts of the birth of the Antichrist. In the absence of any tradition to guide illustrators in what to show, the scenes of Caesar's birth are surprisingly accurate, although revealing wide variation in the position of the mother and of the incision. In particular, contemporary belief that the mother could not survive met an obstacle in the tradition that Caesar's mother died during his Gallic campaigns; as a result, illustrators hedged their bets in her representation. Most important for the author's argument, however, is the change in the personnel of the birth chamber; illustrations of Caesar's birth up to 1400 show only midwives present, but after this date men are seen performing the operation.

This point leads on to the more familiar topic of the marginalisation of women in obstetrics, here set in the dual context of the redefinition of professional boundaries and the rise in accusations of witchcraft. The author argues from the iconographic material that men's entry into the birth chamber comes earlier than has previously been thought, Caesarian section representing the first stage in the process. The role of the midwife in this context was doubly problematic; by cutting the body, she veered towards the domain of the surgeon, while by making the decision whether or not to perform a Caesarean she was responsible for the baptism, and thus the salvation, of the child.

*Not of woman born* is, as already indicated, strongest on the iconographic representation of Caesarean birth. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski is less effective in her handling of the early texts;

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for example, she makes much of medical men's claims, in the fifteenth century, to have performed the operation in person—what she calls “the innovative male presence”—although, as she herself notes, such claims in other contexts often merely preface a passage copied from another writer. Despite such reservations, this is an unusual, lively and readable volume.

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JAMES R. MOORE (ed), *History, humanity and evolution: essays for John C. Greene*, Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. xii, 429, illus., £35.00, \$59.50 (0–521–33511–6).

John C. Greene is a grand old man of the history of science. His career crucially interlocks with the subject's fortunes in America since the 1940s, both as a discipline in its own right and as a significant constituent of *après-Lovejoy* intellectual history. This volume sets Greene's work as an historian of evolutionary thought against the current state of the art in studies of natural theology, evolutionary theory and scientific naturalism as cultural and polemical constructs. It does this through the framing devices of an “Introductory conversation” between Greene and the editor and an “Afterword” in which Greene comments on the preceding essays put together in his honour.

James R. Moore's interview with Greene is a notable feature of the book and suggests comparisons with an earlier *estschrift* of a great historian of science. In “The making of an honorary Taoist”, the first essay in the 1973 collection, *Changing perspectives in the history of science—Essays in honour of Joseph Needham* (ed. Mikuláš Teich and Robert Young), Needham, writing under the pseudonym of “Henry Holorensaw”, gave his own account of how “a biochemist turned into a historian and sinologist” and came to regard himself as an “honorary Taoist”. Greene, in conversation with Moore, tells of how a liberal Congregationalist from Vermillion, South Dakota passed through the Harvard of the 1940s—the *Pareto Circle* and Society of Fellows in the era of Craine Brinton and A. N. Whitehead—and came to produce the classic account of the dissolution of the static view of nature that was to be published as *The death of Adam: evolution and its impact on western thought* (1959).

Another parallel between the two volumes is that both are seen by their editors as important staging posts along the road from the subject's “coming of age. . . as a discipline” (Teich and Young) in the late 1950s and early sixties. Where Teich and Young emphasized the increasingly interdisciplinary character of the history of science since that time, Moore sees the thirty-year interval since the centennial commemorations of *The origin of species* as a period during which the “interests and interpretations” of the principal commentators on evolution have changed fundamentally. In spite of, but also because of the “Darwin industry”, Moore observes, “Today's historians are more likely to fault than to flatter biologists' triumphal polarization of their disciplinary past. Darwin, for them, is not the revolutionary figure he once appeared to be, evolutionary ideas are not simply the rational outcome of a self-correcting science.” Greene's particular contribution to this change has been to show the primary importance of the religious, philosophical and political constituents of evolutionary thought in all its biological, geological and astronomical complexities. His emphasis on the ways in which, as Moore puts it, “the human significance of evolution” was and continues to be “paramount” has inspired the generation of historians represented in *History, humanity and evolution*.

Historiographically, Greene's influence can be located in three related areas. In the first place, his writings have provided a bridge between Lovejoy's “unit ideas” and the more recent project of a social history of ideas. Second, most notably in the 1971 essay “The Kuhnian paradigm and the Darwinian revolution in natural history”, Greene convincingly argued that Kuhn's model of scientific change, “sealed off” from the extra-scientific influences of religion, ideology and culture, was peculiarly inappropriate for explaining the success of natural selection in Victorian Britain. Although Greene has always stressed that ideas do have a history of their own, his adage in the title essay of the 1981 collection *Science, ideology and world view* that “The lines between science, ideology, and world view are seldom tightly drawn” has