

Book Reviews

women's movement as Victorian women's mission to women in the home became extended to more public settings, particularly in local rather than national contexts. And this leads to a third theme: women's welfare activities, especially, but not only, before they gained parliamentary suffrage, were to be found mainly at the local level, often embedded in specifically female networks. Chapters on Octavia Hill and Louisa Twining, by Caroline Morrell and Theresa Deane respectively, illustrate this and the significance of gender in the construction of welfare work.

Perhaps the most unexpected contribution is Sheila Ryan Johannsson's detailed comparison of female mortality patterns in Japan and England in the late nineteenth century. Johannsson shows how women's life chances depended on state policies and societal valuation of their lives, and not just on access to wages. The impact of industrial employment was very different for young Japanese and young English women. Anne Digby reviews the roles of women as providers and managers (as mothers, volunteers and professionals) in the face of poverty in early twentieth-century Britain. Maternalism appears to have been an important lever for empowering and assisting women at local levels but, at national level, welfare benefits remained firmly tied to labour market participation, to women's disadvantage. Lesley Hoggart's chapter on campaigns for birth control in the Labour movement in the 1920s also contrasts strong local support for birth control as a boon for mothers with, until 1930, resistance to its adoption as national Labour Party policy. She attributes this resistance to electoral considerations, to the (female and male) leadership's judgements about what potential voters would find acceptable, rather than to male prejudice alone. Electoral considerations, especially appeal to the new women voters, are seen as one (but only one) reason for the Labour Party's strong rhetorical commitment to child welfare during the inter-war years in John Stewart's chapter. Pat Thane's review of policies for and affecting the elderly from the 1870s to the 1940s shows that enfranchising elderly women did not

generate an equivalent rhetorical commitment to their welfare. Jane Lewis's concluding chapter provides an overview on women as clients as well as providers of welfare, drawing particularly on recent comparative literature on the development of welfare states. If it were not for the price, this chapter and the editors' introduction alone would justify the book's becoming recommended reading on many undergraduate welfare or women's history or social policy courses. Not all the individual contributions are of such a high standard, but overall this collection is a valuable addition to recent welfare history.

Mary Ann Elston, Royal Holloway

Jeffrey P Baker, *The machine in the nursery: incubator technology and the origins of newborn intensive care*, Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, pp. x, 247, illus., £37.00 (0-8018-5173-4).

The machine in the nursery joins a long and growing list of recent historical scholarship whose main thesis is that knowledge and technology develop differently under different national and social contexts. Jeffrey Baker sets out to illustrate how social and cultural factors influence the evolution of medical technology by studying the development of the infant incubator—for the care of premature infants—in France and the United States between 1880 and 1922. His endpoints are chosen because the infant incubator was invented by the French physician Stéphane Tarnier in 1880 and in 1922 the pediatrician Julius Hess—long held to be the “father of American neonatology”—became nationally recognized for both the publication of his landmark work, *Premature and congenitally diseased infants*, and his founding of the first permanent American premature-infant nursery in Chicago, Illinois.

In the early chapters of the book, Baker discusses late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century ideas of premature infants; the early types of incubators developed by French

Book Reviews

physicians such as Tarnier, Pierre Budin, and others; and how French society of the *fin de siècle* understood and received these incubators. He then discusses the nuances of technology transfer and transformation as the incubator made its way across the Atlantic, some ten to twenty years after its invention and acceptance in France. Baker spends considerable time illustrating how this particular process of technology transfer was influenced by other inventions that were widely heralded in the popular press and which caught the imagination of the American and French public.

One of the most interesting chapters of the book, 'Propaganda for the premies', discusses the many uses of the premature infant incubator, from life-saving machine employed in a hospital, to venues of entertainment at world fairs, expositions, and amusement parks such as Coney Island. And while "premie" is probably a more recognizable term to modern-day physicians than it would have been to those early twentieth-century ones he is writing about, Baker ably documents how teams of physicians and showmen developed premature-baby shows—complete with medical attendants, nurses, and babies in incubators—ranging from Barnum-esque displays of entertainment to earnest attempts at educating the American public on the scientific contributions being made by this new technology. Other chapters explore how physicians of different specialties and viewpoints—chiefly, obstetricians and paediatricians—developed markedly different views of the premature infant and its aftercare. A final essay explores the eclipse of the incubator in the United States as paediatricians and public health workers of the first two decades of the twentieth century turned from treatment of the premature infant to prevention strategies, such as education efforts. In France, as Baker points out, the stresses of World War I further splintered a similar redirection of energies from the treatment of prematurity to its prevention.

In his conclusion, Dr Baker asks if the infant incubator was a technology that "misfired".

Aside from the shocking visual image this metaphor conjures, Baker concludes that this is not the story of a technology that was ignored by an unappreciated or apathetic audience. On the contrary, as *The machine in the nursery* demonstrates, the incubator attracted the attention of some of the best paediatricians and obstetricians of the day.

Howard Markel,
University of Michigan Medical School

Janet Golden, *A social history of wet nursing in America: from breast to bottle*, Cambridge History of Medicine series, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. xiii, 215, £40.00, \$54.95 (0-521-49544-X).

This book sets out to record the history of wet-nursing in the United States from colonial times to the twentieth century. It also documents why Americans ultimately rejected this method of infant nutrition, based on the assumption that "what 'science' produced was superior to what 'nature' provided" (p. 1). Yet as Golden insists, these events should not be seen as a dichotomy between wet-nursing and artificial infant feeding. Instead, studying such a process requires a broad interpretive framework that incorporates the social class divisions between wet-nurses and their employers, the changes over time in how Americans perceived and valued their children, the steadily increasing influence and authority of medical science and the role of the physician in prescribing child-rearing practices, and the many problems of wet-nursing that arose during the nineteenth century but remained culturally embedded in infant nutrition discourse well into the twentieth century.

The book's first section offers an exploration of wet-nursing in ante-bellum America. Golden discusses the infant-feeding practices used during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with attention to the intertwined discourse on religious and medical views of mothering as it pertained to wet-nursing. The narrative