

indicated a deeper, subtler and underplayed evolution within the field of psychiatry, one that related to social and cultural shifts during the mid-twentieth century.

In the introduction of Edward Shorter's influential 1997 book, *A History of Psychiatry*, he writes that his subject was a 'minefield'. In his view, both revisionists and neoapologists (as he described himself) were in perilous terrain, because their interpretations risked being 'blown up' by new evidence. Even as he rejected the revisionist orthodoxy in psychiatric scholarship, Shorter noted, 'many surprises may lie in store for us all'.⁷ He was undoubtedly correct, since, over ten years later we are witnessing intriguing scholarship related to DSM, culture and psychiatry, discrete psychiatric diagnoses, and the family unit in psychiatry. Thus, even though the pendulum metaphor continues to act as a guide, and rightfully so, a small selection of books in 2013 confirms that abundant surprises certainly lay ahead.

Lucas Richert and Frances Reilly
University of Saskatchewan, Canada

doi:10.1017/mdh.2014.59

Yolanda Eraso, *Representing Argentine Mothers: Medicine, Ideas and Culture in the Modern Era, 1900–1946* (New York: Rodopi, 2013), pp. xv, 293, \$91.00, hardback, ISBN: 978-90-420-3704-5.

The past few decades have produced a group of excellent works on women's history in Argentina, and some of the best of these incorporate medicine, health and the body as central themes of analysis. Yolanda Eraso's book *Representing Argentine Mothers: Medicine, Ideas and Culture in the Modern Era, 1900–1946* is a fine addition to this literature, and is also an innovative and intriguing study in its own right. In this sense, it complements recent work by noted scholars of Argentine women's history, such as Donna Guy, Dora Barrancos, Kristin Ruggiero, Natalia Milanese and others. Eraso's book, a theoretically sophisticated and interdisciplinary study of the meaning, symbolism and status of mothers in early twentieth-century Argentina, speaks to the concerns not just of Argentine cultural history but also gender studies, the history of medicine and the feminist history of art and representation. Indeed, Eraso's interdisciplinary approach spans all these fields, yet avoids being too diffuse, as she stays with her unifying idea: to examine 'representations of the maternal by different social and cultural registers.' (p. 9)

Crossing genres of cultural history, medical history, art history and popular culture in Argentina, Eraso hones in on the first half of the twentieth century, bringing the reader to the cusp of Peronism. This period (1900–46) is significant for the notable accumulation and growing influence of medical discourse in public policy as well as culture at large. It also allows her to tap directly into events of the 1930s and 1940s, a period that represented the heyday of eugenics in Argentina as well as a set of issues of great interest of historians. Spatially, the book focuses on Córdoba, Argentina's 'second city' and an important site for the production of medical knowledge in this period, with frequent references to developments in the more studied area in and around Buenos Aires.

Eraso begins the book with a reminder of the symbolic centrality of the figure of the Mother in Argentine history. While mothers have unique and central importance in all cultures, each time and place puts their own spin on it. How people see, speak out,

⁷ Edward Shorter, *A History of Psychiatry: From the Era of the Asylum to the Age of Prozac* (New York: John Wiley, 1997), ix.

understand, represent and treat the females of their society is directly related to ideas of the Mother as shaped by the specific circumstances of the moment. In Argentine history, heavily laden interpretations of Mother abound. For example, folk legends dating to the 1840s worship a mythical figure of a dead woman known as *la Difunta Correa* whose breasts continued to provide milk for her baby; Eva Perón was venerated as the Mother of the nation to her followers in the 1940s and even after her death; and finally, the mourning and protesting Mothers of the 'Disappeared' of the 1970s–1980s Dirty War have become international icons of political motherhood. In this context, it makes sense to explore the early twentieth century, a time of intense cultural reproduction of medicalised ideas about mothers and the female body.

After an Introductory chapter in which Eraso establishes her scope and goals, she elucidates her novel interdisciplinary methodology, and provides context on Argentina's main contextual details (e.g. large-scale European immigration; conflicts over religion and secularisation; rising military forces; and of course, gender ideology and nationalism more broadly). After this, the book is organized into three parts (in seven chapters), in turn examining medical ideas and institutions; the press and fiction; and art. All three parts are coherent discussions with well-organised and documented chapters, complete with abundant and interesting source material and illustrations. Over the course of the book, Eraso shows how these three sets of ideas shaded into each other and mutually informed ideas about mothers' bodies, roles and agency, accomplished by, in Eraso's words, 'bringing together medicine, society, and culture . . . eschew[ing] dichotomous counter-positions between the contents of medicine on the one hand, and ideas, notions, and range of cultural expressions on the other.' (p. 253) Indeed, she emphasises the *integration* of these discourses.

The book successfully makes the case that there are relevant connections between medicine, art and popular culture in our exploration of gender ideology and sex roles, for example, the role of the influence of institutions on ideas about the maternal body. It will be valued for its contribution to Argentine social and cultural history and interdisciplinary feminist studies. It will also be discussed by historians examining the significance of eugenics and other medicalised political ideas and practices in this part of the world. Ultimately, *Representing Argentine Mothers* is a well executed and thought-provoking study that will be read with great interest by a broad community of scholars.

Julia Rodriguez

University of New Hampshire, USA

doi:10.1017/mdh.2014.60

Jeanne E. Abrams, *Revolutionary Medicine: The Founding Fathers and Mothers in Sickness and in Health* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), pp. 314, \$30.00, paperback, ISBN: 978-0-8147-8919-3.

All too often, histories of the American founders focus on the heroic and the lofty, as though the day-to-day experiences of these mortal human beings were not also comprised of deeply felt struggles with health and sickness. Jeanne E. Abrams sets out in *Revolutionary Medicine* to offer just such a recasting. Her presentation puts familiar characters – the Washingtons, Franklins, Adamases, Jeffersons and, to a lesser extent, the Madisons – in a new light. Many of the major medical questions of the day are engaged here, from excruciatingly high miscarriage and neonatal death rates, to struggles with disease in an age of poor hygiene, especially malaria and smallpox.