

more than a century old, and painters have flourished there, from Charles Heaphy and John Gully to Doris Lusk and Toss Woollaston.

The book has been attractively produced by Cape Catley with clear typeface and generous margins. The text is thoroughly sourced, Nelson having a rich file of newspapers covering the whole European period, which has provided much of the book's material. There is an extensive bibliography and an index. Finally, one of the outstanding features of the book is the abundance of splendid illustrations, most of which are drawn from the photographic collections in the Nelson Provincial Museum. These provide compelling glimpses of daily life and many older Nelsonians will delight in recognizing occasions and characters they remember.

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Doctoring Childbirth and Regulating Midwifery in New Zealand: A Foucauldian Perspective. By Elaine Papps and Mark Olssen. The Dunmore Press, Palmerston North, 1997. 215 pp. NZ price: \$34.95. ISBN 0-86469-284-6.

CHILDBIRTH HISTORICALLY has been contested terrain and continues to be so, as this latest study shows. Elaine Papps and Mark Olssen have a joint interest in midwifery education and a target audience for this book will be the new intakes of students to direct-entry midwifery courses, which are deliberately kept separate from nursing training and, by inference, a controlling medical model.

This study has much to recommend it to historians who may wish to praise and favour, or attempt to criticize, its Foucauldian interpretation of childbirth. However one views Foucault, the core concepts evoked by and invoked in his name are well applied in this general overview of the laws which regulate midwifery education and practice in New Zealand. Papps and Olssen trace the shift from the midwife to the doctor and medical control of birth, back to the midwife with the passing of the Nurses Amendment Act 1990, which restored the midwife's autonomy as a practitioner. Using Foucault's concept of disciplinary power through surveillance, they examine the development of a gendered, medical discourse about birth and the regulation of midwifery. They aim to provide a long-term view of the medicalization of birth as a backdrop to a New Zealand study of how midwives were edged out of and returned to birthing services between the Midwives Act of 1904 and the 1990 legislation. Their poststructuralist approach shares with the Australian work of Kerreen Reiger an emphasis on structures of gender, knowledge and power and on a scientific world-view of 'what Habermas calls technocratic rationality' (p.145).

Doctoring Childbirth and Regulating Midwifery's core thesis is that what was at issue in midwifery regulation was a 'struggle for the control of childbirth' (p.17). This thesis is not new. What is new in this country is the Foucauldian framework, combined with an emphasis on midwifery as opposed to obstetrics. Of particular value is the analysis of the relationship between midwifery and nursing and its part in midwifery regulation. Problematically for midwifery, it became caught up in the professionalization of nursing. Indeed, midwifery became subsumed into nursing in a process that the authors identify extended from the 1904 Act to the Nurses and Midwives Registration Act 1925 — which had the effect of recategorizing the majority of women previously classified as midwives

as maternity nurses — on to the Nurses Act 1971 — when midwives lost their right in law to practise independently of doctors — which culminated in the 1990 Act, when midwives regained their autonomy. The point is well made that in order to be self-governing — and thus a profession in its own right — midwifery had to break free from nursing.

This approach overlooks a few complexities, however. The tensions between different kinds of midwife, for example the older, married woman and the young, 'modern', hospital-trained midwife in the 1920s, are not developed because the foci of attention are the battles, at three levels, between midwives and nurses, midwives and doctors, and doctors and 'consumers'. Where historians may take issue with this interpretation is in its focus on 'wholes' rather than parts, which has the effect of neglecting difference. Consequently 'women' and 'doctors', too, tend to be seen as a class. This does not sit well with feminist scholarship which has deconstructed the category 'woman', for instance, to show how, historically, an alliance between doctors and middle-class women cemented medical control, while (as the authors acknowledge) a general practitioner with a hospital midwife is still the commonest choice made by New Zealand women to assist them through childbirth. The relationship of the woman doctor with the midwife is similarly left unexplored.

That it has stimulated such questions itself suggests this study's worth. Papps and Olssen have collaborated to produce a rigorous and rewarding account which is to be highly recommended for providing an overview of changes to childbirth in the twentieth century from a theoretical perspective, for privileging the midwife and midwifery and for bringing the analysis of the struggles for control over birth into the 1990s. In particular, it illuminates the resurgence of the midwifery model. This had to be acknowledged as a safe and viable alternative to the medical model's assumption that birth is a medical event for the autonomous midwife. What New Zealand has witnessed since 1983 has been a shift 'back to the future', as a result this time of an alliance between midwives and middle-class women. So far this swing back has been in terms of who catches the baby; whether there will be a return to home births has yet to be seen.

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Mothers and King Baby: Infant Survival and Welfare in an Imperial World: Australia 1880–1950. By Philippa Mein Smith. Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1997. 330pp. NZ price: \$59.95. ISBN 0-333-67827-3.

AFTER READING Philippa Mein Smith's chapters on the causes of infant mortality, you will never again look at milk in the same way. Mein Smith has captured, in horrifying detail, the struggles of mothers trying to keep their babies alive in a world without sanitation, sewerage, or refrigeration. *Mothers and King Baby* is an engaging exploration of what Mein Smith calls the 'white health transition' (p.8), the period between the 1890s and 1945, during which the real numbers of white babies dying in Australia halved. Her purpose is to consider the claims that the infant welfare movement was an important factor in this health transition by examining, among other things, the cultural, social and economic changes affecting motherhood and maternal practices, and by probing the nationalist myth-making and the place of mothers within this myth-making (p.9).

Mein Smith's study is part of a growing body of Australian literature in which babies