

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