

psychiatric patients; and patients' rights. These tangents only serve to muddy the waters of an already complex subject.

References

May, Elaine Tyler. *Barren in the Promised Land: Childless Americans and the Pursuit of Happiness*. Harvard University Press, 1995.

A Social History of Wet Nursing in America: From Breast to Bottle

Janet Golden
New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996

Reviewed by Denise R. Shaw

In *A Social History of Wet Nursing in America*, Janet Golden traces the changing role of the wet nurse from the colonial period into the twentieth century. Golden examines the tensions between public and private discourse in hiring a wet nurse, taking into account the changing economic, medical, and technical advances that have affected the American family. Of interest to Golden is the changing relationship between families, wet nurses, and the medical community. She notes that the demise of the wet nurse began when childbirth, motherhood, and childrearing practices became "medicalized" and breast milk alternatives (formulas, etc.) became available. Since they were "less expensive or . . . more convenient," wet nurses were not "defeat[ed]" by the introduction of artificial feedings. Their defeat came out of "growing social class divisions between the women who were employed as wet nurses and the families for which they worked, the changing cultural perceptions of motherhood and infancy that were linked to the rise of America's middle class, the growing authority of medical science, the expanding role of physicians in shaping childrearing practices and the profound ethical dilemmas raised by the practice of wet nursing in the nineteenth century." Following the "gradual medicalization of motherhood that began in the nineteenth century," the demise of the wet nurse was sealed in the twentieth century when "scientific mother[hood]" was celebrated.

Golden explores several themes, beginning with the "negotiated professional authority" between women and physicians. Interestingly, as physicians gained authority over childbirth and childrearing and mother's milk was deemed "best" for infants, there was no place for milk supplied by the wet nurse. Secondly, Golden explores the "changing meaning of motherhood" which

evolved over the centuries as physicians became a “social authority” on childrearing practices. Social opinion followed the lead of physicians and wet nurses, once considered a vital element in the nursery, soon were seen as “moral lepers.” Once employed by upper class women or by women whose health required the use of a wet nurse to feed a newborn infant, the wet nurse was seen as intrusive and disruptive.

Golden examined letters and diaries to compile firsthand, personal accounts of the employment of wet nurses, and the emotional aspects surrounding the need for and utilization of a wet nurse. She also examines newspaper and magazine articles that contain ads for wet nurses, as well as editorial comments that shed light on the cultural debates and social mores pertaining to the use of a wet nurse. As Golden points out, these mores changed drastically with each passing century. As Richard A. Menkel of Brown University notes, Golden’s exhaustive and comprehensive research helps “illuminate the complex and multilayered social, medical, domestic and labor relationships that constituted wet nursing as a practice.” *A Social History of Wet Nursing* is a must read for anyone interested in the changing cultural, social, economic, and medical influences on mothers throughout American history.

Mother Time: Women, Aging, and Ethics

Margaret Urban Walker, ed.
Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999

Reviewed by Emily Jeremiah

Common to all the articles in this volume is a freshness that reflects the book’s novelty. As editor Margaret Urban Walker claims, *Mother Time* is “a sampler, an experiment” that charts “initial and exploratory journeys” (4, 1). As Walker argues persuasively in her introduction, the enmeshed issues of aging, gender, and ethics barely have been touched upon in any discipline, and they demand investigation. This collection offers a range of possible starting-points for such an investigation.

For theorists of maternity, the collection is significant in two important ways. First, several of the articles are concerned with the nature and status of work that traditionally has been performed by women, in particular the issue of care. Martha Holstein, for example, provides a subtle analysis of the gendered nature of caregiving. And Sara Ruddick, characteristically rigorous and inspiring, develops new insights into the ethics of such caregiving. Her