

Book Notices

Frank Mort, *Dangerous sexualities: medico-moral politics in England since 1830*, 2nd ed., London and New York, Routledge, 2000, pp. xxviii, 250, illus., £16.99 (paperback 0-415-16734-5).

First published in 1987, it is good to have a second edition of the now-classic *Dangerous sexualities* available. Readers need not fear any significant revision of Frank Mort's original text: this is essentially a contextual up-dating exercise. For all that, it is an ambitious up-dating. Minor errors have been corrected, illustrations have been added, the bibliography revised and extended by a review of work published since the first edition. The most significant addition is the new introduction, which discusses recent development in research on sexuality in the wider context of cultural history. In particular, Mort identifies several "post-Foucaultian trajectories on sexuality which intersect with a larger project for a cultural history": the self in history, the representational quality of desire, the national and colonial dimensions of sexuality, and sexuality and space. The main text being re-located within the concerns of recent scholarship, Mort offers a revised conclusion to the book. By linking the history of sexuality through cultural history to the enterprise of exploring the nature of modernity, he describes how this demands new historical narratives and a "new language of the historical itself". By setting a challenging agenda for future research in this area, Mort re-states his position not just as a leading historian of sexuality, but as a leading participant in the field of cultural studies.

Hilary Marland and Ann Marie Rafferty (eds), *Midwives, society and childbirth: debates and controversies in the modern*

period, Studies in the Social History of Medicine, London and New York, Routledge, 1997, pp. xiii, 278, £50.00 (0-415-13328-9).

This edited volume explores the history of midwifery from the early nineteenth century to the present day in a number of western European countries (Sweden, Denmark, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, England) and the USA. The range of countries covered and the different expertise of the authors (the chapters are written by a variety of historians, sociologists, midwives, nurses and physicians) mean that the book gives a wonderfully rich overview of and introduction to the history of modern midwifery. Teresa Ortiz and Clara Martínez Padilla, for instance, in a particularly interesting essay analyse the impact of changes in education on the practice of midwives in nineteenth-century Spain. June Hannam, in another commendable piece, examines how the ideas on the future of midwifery of Rosalind Paget, one of the driving forces behind the Midwives Institute at the turn of the twentieth century, were affected by concerns about the relationship between women's role in politics, paid employment, and social welfare. In conjunction, the articles give a picture of the evolving debates about the roles and tasks of midwives, and the effects of competition from doctors, institutionalization, and the "public health challenge". The greatest strength of the volume is that it makes clear that although there existed shared concerns about midwives' roles in the countries examined, the redefinition of midwifery varied considerably, depending on national and regional circumstances.