

The two competing techniques of cataract surgery, depression and extraction, are precisely described and critically compared. This was the ophthalmic subject of the period. It is beneficial that Stoll's editor is an experienced ophthalmic surgeon himself. Thus, he is able to explain convincingly some of Stoll's surgical recommendations, eg. when he speaks of 'exerting a gentle and slow pressure' (pages 51 of the text and 82 of the introduction). The ophthalmic surgical equipment of Stoll's time is described in detail. The literature listed by Stoll in 1791 is also most interesting (261–9). Older works, such as Bartisch's 'Augendienst' of 1583 are quoted as well as the medical observations during a journey of Johann Nepomuk Hunscoovsky in 1783. Latin treatises are quoted along with German, French and English publications. Scientific work in 1791 implied quite naturally a retrospective view.

The book introduces the reader to the scientific medical world of the late eighteenth century, covering both the facts and the atmosphere. Whoever is interested in the history of ophthalmology, will be supplied with the sources in a clear, vivid and readable way. And he will learn a lot about the methods and problems of this subject in the days of Goethe.

Klaus Bergdolt
University of Koeln

doi:10.1017/mdh.2014.33

Charlotte Biltekoff, *Eating Right in America: The Cultural Politics of Food and Health* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2013), pp. 208, \$22.95, paperback, ISBN: 978-0-8223-5559-5.

Although still dominated by food biographies, meal ethnographies and explorations of the cultural significance of cooking and eating, the field of food studies has begun to incorporate issues of health and medicine into studies of food and foodscapes. Historians of modern medicine, who until recently had largely ignored food and nutrition, have likewise developed a more substantial body of work on the intersections of food, diet and health. Given the prominence of dietary issues in contemporary medicine and public health, agriculture, commerce and politics, the efforts of scholars in both fields are sorely needed to help frame and investigate the highly complex problems of food and nutrition policy.

Charlotte Biltekoff, Assistant Professor of American Studies and Food Science and Technology at the University of California, Davis, contributes to this effort by exploring the history of 'the interplay of the moral and the quantitative that is at the core of modern ideals of dietary health'. Her goal is to 'reveal and understand' the idea that 'dietary advice is an objective reflection of scientific knowledge and that its primary aim is to produce healthier bodies', and she critiques this idea through case studies of four dietary reforms: the development of scientific cookery during the Progressive Era; the creation of the recommended dietary allowances (RDAs) during World War II; the alternative food movement that began in the 1960s; and the recent campaign against overweight and obesity.

The case studies are well chosen. *Eating Right in America* offers a concise, accessible introduction for undergraduates or readers who have little knowledge of the history and politics of dietary reform in the long twentieth century. That being said, the use of history in this book is highly problematic. After briefly characterizing histories written by nutrition

scientists, the social histories of nutrition from the 1960s and 1970s, and the cultural histories from the 1980s on, she states that ‘Beliefs about the empirical truth of science and the objective reality of the human body that anchor the works described above become the subject of critical inquiry for scholars, like myself, working in an area we might call “critical nutrition studies”’. By creating this straw man, Biltekoff fails to engage, or even to cite, the considerable work done on the history of diet and nutrition in the past several decades, much of which is directly relevant to her own, and none of which could be characterized in this way.¹

Biltekoff begins with late nineteenth century efforts by home economists to establish scientific cookery. ‘Enthusiastically embracing nutrition as a simultaneously empirical and moral tool’, Biltekoff argues, ‘these women articulated a striking faith in the power of eating right to mitigate the most pressing social concerns of the time’. But in focusing only on two seminal individuals, Ellen Richards and Wilbur Atwater, as emblematic of a larger movement, Biltekoff commits a fallacy of composition. For example, she argues that ‘as the public kitchens failed, Richards shifted focus away from working with the urban poor and toward dietary reform among the middle class’, but this was certainly not indicative of the field of home economics nor of dietary reform as a whole. Home economists continued and even extended their nutrition work with the poor in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, by establishing school lunches and nutrition classes, and through settlement houses, extension programs and social work. Major organs of domestic science, such as the *Journal of Home Economics*, routinely published articles on nutrition work with immigrants and the poor, and social justice was a central goal of home economics. While issues of class and race certainly coloured these efforts, the suggestion that dietary reform came to target the middle classes disproportionately is misleading.

In the second case study, Biltekoff attempts to show the impact on dietary reform of the discovery of vitamins and the civic mobilization efforts during World War II, which stimulated the development of the first RDAs. She wants to draw a distinction between the ‘crusading activists’ of the turn of the century and the ‘federally mandated, recognized experts in nutrition, food, and health’ of the 1940s, but this distinction is only so clear because she did not look at the activities of state and local governments, where authority over most issues related to public health lay, in the earlier period. This distorts both the construction of expertise and the history of dietary reform. Nevertheless, chapter three nicely encapsulates the ways in which Americans were encouraged to construct better selves through better diets by an increasingly formalized nutritional health program.

The third case study, which explores the alternative food movement, shares many of the weaknesses of the first, including an excessive concentration on a few individuals and the absence of larger context. By jumping around in time between the 1960s and the present, Biltekoff implies a continuity within the movement that is far more problematic than she seems to suggest. Vegetarianism, for example, hardly appears at all. She argues, importantly, that the countercultural food movement actually had quite a lot in common

¹ See, for example, Michael Ackerman, *Interpreting the ‘Newer Knowledge of Nutrition’: Science, Interests, and Values in the Making of Dietary Advice in the United States, 1915–1965* (PhD thesis: University of Virginia, 2005); Rima D. Apple, *Vitamina: Vitamins in American Culture* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996); Kathleen R. Babbitt, ‘Legitimizing nutrition education: the impact of the great depression’, in Sarah Stage and Virginia B. Vincenti (eds), *Rethinking Home Economics: Women and the History of a Profession* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 145–62; David Cantor, Christian Bonah and Matthias Dörries (eds), *Meat, Medicine and Human Health in the Twentieth Century* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2010); Ann F. La Berge, ‘How the Ideology of Low Fat Conquered America’, *Journal of the History of Medicine & Allied Sciences* 63, 2 (2008): 139–77.

with earlier reformatory efforts; the shift in emphasis from eating well for the nation to eating well for the planet, and from eating for individual health to eating for individual *and* ecological health, did little to change the prescriptive, normalizing nature of earlier dietary recommendations and belied a marked neoliberal undercurrent.

In the final case study, Biltekoff construes the dietary reform efforts attendant with the obesity epidemic of the past two decades (and obesity concern going back to the 1950s) as a convergence of biomedical concepts of eating right and ecological concepts of eating right. This is an interesting claim, but Biltekoff misrepresents the uniqueness of these dietary reforms. ‘The campaign against obesity was unrecognisable as a dietary reform campaign’, she argues. ‘It emanated from locations beyond nutrition and public health, and it focused broadly on a range of behaviours that transcended eating habits’. However, neither of these characteristics was unique to this context or time period, being instead an artefact of selection bias in the sources and case studies chosen. For example, she states that ‘unlike in the other movements I have examined, many of the players in this campaign stood to profit from defining obesity as a health crisis’. Had she consulted, say, Rima Apple’s work on vitamins (see no. 1), not to mention the large literature on this issue in the history of medicine more generally, she would have realized that commercial interests have long contributed to and benefited from the construction of health issues. While Biltekoff suggests that the ‘core message – that people needed to either attain or maintain a “healthy weight” – was not exactly dietary advice’, preoccupation with weight was quite common in nutrition campaigns throughout the 20th century.² Historians of medicine will note as well that Biltekoff does not discuss the low-fat, low-salt or cholesterol-controlling diet reforms that emerged in part from research on coronary heart disease.

As with any synthetic work, it is not possible to cover all topics, and a certain level of generalization is required. *Eating Right in America* is an ambitious book, attempting as it does to cover a wide range of complex developments for a non-specialist audience, and in parts it does so quite well. But its ambition is ultimately unrealized. Incomplete scholarship and oversimplification create a narrative that is compelling but historically flawed and lacking in analytical rigour. Indeed, *Eating Right in America* reflects the vast gap that exists between scholarship on the history of health and medicine and scholarship in food studies and related fields, such as fat studies. To improve our understanding of the complex relationship between diet and health, this is a gap we must endeavour to close.

A.R. Ruis

University of Wisconsin, Madison, USA

doi:10.1017/mdh.2014.34

Malcolm Nicolson and John E.E. Fleming, *Imaging and Imagining the Fetus: The Development of Obstetric Ultrasound* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), pp. xi, 317, \$50.00/£26.00, hardback, ISBN: 978-1-4214-0793-7.

Since the 1960s fetuses have become some of the most visually resonant biomedical entities and ultrasound has played the major role in their clinical imaging. But for all

² See, for example, Jeffrey P. Brosco, ‘Weight charts and well child care: when the pediatrician became the expert in child health,’ in *Formative Years: Children’s Health in the United States, 1880–2000*, Alexandra Minna Stern and Howard Markel (eds) (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 91–120; A.R. Ruis, ‘“Children with Half-starved Bodies” and the Assessment of Malnutrition in the United States, 1890–1950’, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 87, 3 (2013): 380–408.