

population problem, that is, eugenics, Malthusianism, feminism, ecology, economics and environmentalism (360). But, on the other hand, the book presents convoluted histories as they are, and forcefully thrusts to the fore the aspects of inconsistencies and conflicts in the arguments, beliefs and moral judgements about the world population problem. It is an extremely difficult book to summarise, but it is precisely because of this that the book merits attention and praise. The book, indeed, helps you to think big.

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Victoria Bates, *Sexual Forensics in Victorian and Edwardian England: Age, Crime and Consent in the Courts* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 200, £58.00, hardback, ISBN: 978-1-137-44170-6.

When and how is a line drawn by medicine and by wider society between the ostensibly separate categories of ‘child’, ‘young person’ and ‘adult’? What constitutes ‘responsibility’ and ‘consent’? Who should have the power to ultimately decide on whether an individual fits these labels? These broad descriptions are, of course, neither value-neutral nor unchanging, but they are historically and culturally specific. In this well-written, accessible and engaging study, Victoria Bates has drawn on a rich variety of published and archival sources in order to interrogate the role played by forensic medicine (both in theory and in practice) in shaping trials for child sexual abuse in Victorian and Edwardian England. Structured around six primary themes – knowledge, injury, innocence, consent, emotions and offenders – Bates is careful to strike a fine balance between giving details of individual trials and setting these distressing but sensitively discussed cases in their broader social, cultural and intellectual context. If the law expected that matters such as chronological age might smooth out criminal proceedings, such as in cases where the victim was too young for any question of ‘consent’ to have arisen, conflicting medical and cultural expectations could often mean that even very young children were examined carefully for physical signs of ‘resistance’ such as cuts and bruises, despite the fact that their age made this totally irrelevant. The body and mind of the victim (and to a lesser extent the perpetrator) and how this was ‘read’ by an examining physician was therefore crucial in determining both what charges might be brought against an assailant and the final outcome.

One particularly fascinating aspect of the book, and one that will guarantee its place on multiple reading lists, is that Bates has included at the end of Chapters 2–6 her careful transcriptions of individual case studies that illuminate the issues highlighted by the relevant chapter. She has also provided a detailed two-page analysis in each of these instances about what the significance of this case was for the broader picture of sexual forensics in Victorian and Edwardian England.

Reproducing in full pre-trial witness statements taken at the quarter sessions of Middlesex and Somerset between 1858 and 1889 gives a vivid insight into how the specifics of these cases played out before the magistrates, and, given the patchy survival rate of assize depositions relating to crimes other than murder, the quarter sessions can provide an invaluable glimpse of how offences that have otherwise left limited traces in the archival record were dealt with. Moreover, as Bates herself observes, not only did the assize courts deal with offences in a somewhat different manner to the quarter sessions, but the latter – which tried indictable misdemeanours like attempted rape rather than the

felony of rape itself – dealt with a much higher proportion of sexual offences during this period than the assize courts, given the well-known formal and informal difficulties that have long accompanied attempts to prosecute sex crimes (22–3). Bates’ decision to include transcriptions of these evocative testimonies, and above all her invaluable scene-setting and explanation of why each particular case study was selected for transcription, will be particularly welcomed by those using the book in undergraduate teaching, where students may well have not had an opportunity to read depositions before and will be unfamiliar with their particular style and the logic of how the court proceedings were recorded.

The book also helps to nuance our understanding of the extent to which different types of criminal offence might be understood through a national or local lens by the urban and rural communities within which they occurred during the long nineteenth century. Research on same-sex desire in northern England and gang violence in early twentieth-century Glasgow by Helen Smith and Andrew Davies, respectively, has demonstrated that communities might well insist on a specific regional approach to particular sorts of criminality that could contrast sharply with the judicial or cultural approach demanded by the metropolis.¹ In contrast, the widespread popular and judicial sympathy for infanticide defendants in the same period invariably followed the same broad trajectory across England and Wales.² The demonstration by Bates that very similar issues and competing knowledge claims were made by physicians and magistrates based in both Somerset and Middlesex during the course of the nineteenth century thus raises intriguing questions for readers about the extent to which national, rather than local, constructions of what constituted child sexual abuse, how consent could or should be determined and the power of the medical profession to help detect, prevent and punish the crime held sway. This book will be of great interest to all medical humanities scholars working on the nineteenth century and a key addition to both undergraduate and postgraduate reading lists.

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Angela N.H. Creager, *Life Atomic: A History of Radioisotopes in Science and Medicine* (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 2013), pp. xvi, 489, \$45, ISBN: 978-0-226-01780-8.

In *Life Atomic*, Angela Creager recasts the history of science and medicine in the United States. Hers is a history from below. In Creager’s hands, we see the full scope of biomedical research from the perspective of the radioisotopes that flowed out of nuclear production facilities and through an intricate network of laboratories, environments and living bodies. Isotopes went everywhere in the post-war period, and Creager follows them with rigour and verve.

As its title suggests, *Life Atomic* unearths that sweeping impact of the atomic age, and especially the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), on medicine and the life sciences. While radioisotopes had been in use for decades, the rapid growth of nuclear technology

¹ Helen Smith, *Masculinity, Class and Same-Sex Desire in Industrial England, 1895–1957* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Andrew Davies, *City of Gangs: Glasgow and the Rise of the British Gangster* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2013).

² Daniel J.R. Grey, “‘The agony of despair’: Pain and the cultural script of infanticide in England and Wales, 1860–1960”, in Rob Boddice (ed.), *Pain and Emotion in Modern History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 204–19.