

Supreme Court case in which the United Auto Workers (UAW) challenged the constitutionality of Johnson Control's fetal protection policy. Hepler emphasizes the difficulties that result from the polarization of protective labour legislation and equality based policies regarding women in the workplace. While the Supreme Court declared fetal protection policies unconstitutional in *UAW v. Johnson Controls, Inc.*, (1991), this victory, according to Hepler "must be tempered by the realization that the decision did not result in a different work environment. Emphasizing equal rights has placed responsibility for health on the workers themselves."

*Women in Labor* is an excellent resource for courses on women or gender studies. The book provides an invaluable history of how gender has dictated women's roles at work and at home. Also included are several carefully selected illustrations and photographs that portray women in industry. Hepler's scholarship is impressive and her work is well research and documented.

### **Born to Procreate: Women and Childbirth in France from the Middle Ages to the Eighteenth Century**

Graves, Rolande.  
New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2001.

#### **Reviewed by Susan S. Hennessy**

In *Born to Procreate*, Rolande Graves lays out the history of midwifery and the development of obstetric medicine from medieval times through to the eighteenth century. The book begins with an overview of scientific knowledge during the Middle Ages. While medical doctors published numerous treatises on the female anatomy, beliefs stemming from superstition and the Church continued to override rational explanations for reproduction: "To these theories must be added the philosophical debates on the power or influence of God and the stars on the sperm at the time of conception" (27). Other common beliefs included the notion of menstruation as a necessary purification of the body, or that menstruation was a means of shedding an overabundance of blood in the woman's body. Such perceptions continued to pervade the scientific realm for centuries to come.

Graves traces the evolution of obstetrical manuals, including those written by *sages femmes*. Ambroise Paré, cited as one of the more influential doctors, published manuals that provided extensive information drawn from his own experience with parturient women. They also describe and attempt to explain common complications of childbirth, stillbirths, and the birth of deformed babies. Here, too, superstition underlies the explanation of unusual births:

“Paré recommends that women not look at monstrous things during intercourse or prior to the ‘formation’ of the baby... Twisted hands or feet, humps or other deformities are the direct result of the bad habits of the mother...” such as wearing clothes that are too tight (56). Because knowledge regarding reproduction remained largely unchanged from the Middle Ages through to the sixteenth century, the treatment of pregnant women often was based on misinformation and age-old notions rather than solid scientific fact.

Chapter three describes the struggle for midwives to improve their skills and maintain their role in the delivery of babies. The gradual education and regulation of midwifery in the 1800s made it possible for midwives to care more effectively for women. This section also describes the rampant infection that killed many parturient women in hospitals: as many as one woman in fifteen died in the best years, one in ten in the worst years.

In the final chapter, the author describes “Precursors of Modern Obstetrics” whose knowledge seems no greater than that of earlier physicians. Illustrations of obstetrical instruments, such as the speculum and forceps, underscore the readiness of doctors to intervene in childbirth. Drawings of the female anatomy remain rudimentary and flawed. Indeed, it is difficult to perceive any progress in obstetric medicine. *Born to Procreate* is useful as an introduction to the history of medical practice as it pertains to women in France. It provides insight into cultural practices that shaped the medical treatment of women, and outlines the evolution of women’s role as caregiver of women. Unfortunately, excessive typographical errors distract the reader, lending an air of amateurism to the book.

## **Mothers and Sons: Feminism, Masculinity, and the Struggle to Raise Our Sons**

O’Reilly, Andrea, ed.  
New York and London: Routledge, 2001.

### **Reviewed by Fiona Joy Green**

Over a decade ago, during a rare speaking engagement in Winnipeg, Gloria Steinem advised a sold-out audience that “we need to raise our sons more like our daughters.” While the violence of boys and male youth experienced in the Columbine shootings and other such horrific actions had not yet occurred, Steinem’s analysis was not new to me. Since the birth of my son fourteen years ago, I have been raising him with the conscious understanding that the mother-son relationship as proscribed by patriarchy is limited, damaging, and dangerous. Sadly, feminist scholarship has continued to focus on mother-daughter relationships, almost to the exclusion of mother-son relationships.