

to lead small research groups. Counting numbers of publications in which the woman director is principal author will not tell us much about success in the broad sense. Why should success be defined in terms of leading large groups and having one's name on many papers? Quite aside from gender specificity, surely what is being measured here is not so much success in science as it is success in applying for grants.

However, it is probably best to leave aside the thorny question of gender difference for the moment—at least in this arena. We must seek equality of opportunity for women in science, if for no other reason than that equality in the economic rewards of science is desirable. If there are major gender differences, then having a critical mass of women scientists must lead, eventually, to changes in scientific practice. While it won't remove competition, it will surely modify it, since what counts as success in life will change.

NOT OF WOMAN BORN: REPRESENTATIONS OF CAESAREAN BIRTH IN MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE CULTURE

Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990.

by Joan Gibson

This study of the early history of Caesarean birth is interesting and readable. Blumenfeld-Kosinski uses her material to highlight issues and questions about the birth process and its cultural context, which emerge most clearly under the extreme conditions implied by Caesareans. The author locates her approach within the radical ambiguity which everywhere surrounds Caesareans—from its simultaneous participation in the realms of the natural, the unnatural and the supernatural, to the unnaturalness itself as a sign of the child's fate for either unusually good for-

tune or bad, to its simultaneous signaling of both death (the mother's) and life (the child's—at least briefly), to its location on the boundaries between areas of female expertise and male professional territory. The work extends considerably the analysis of a range of questions already current in the literature on pre-modern women and childbirth, on the origins of male involvement and domination in obstetrics and gynecology, and on the social role and vulnerability of the midwife. It draws on a wide range of sources, from medicine, law, religion and art, as well as gender studies: a correspondingly wide range of methodologies is required. Blumenfeld-Kosinski has sought "to give the most comprehensive picture possible of Caesarean birth" for the period, and this she has done. It is both the strength and the weakness of the book. It covers a wide range of both generalist and specialist material, in a diversity of disciplines, over an extended and formative period for her subject (mainly the fourteenth century through the sixteenth). No one with an interest in any of her fields can fail to be both enlightened and delighted by much of her material and analysis.

Chapter I addresses primarily the development of medical writing about Caesareans, highlighting the difficulties of extrapolating from written texts to practice, and setting the question within the context of religious and legal requirements to save the unborn child of women dead in childbirth. She argues convincingly that the role of midwives, as it pertained to Caesareans, was affected and devalued by the resulting pressures long before midwives were marginalized in other areas of obstetrics or gynecology. Questions of maternal and infant survival of the Caesarean are also raised.

Chapter II mines the iconographic evidence for Caesareans with considerable sensitivity to the context of the image, and the relation of text and image. She concludes that women were displaced early as the main practitioners of Caesareans, and in Chapter III attempts to explain this in terms of the professionalization of medicine and status distinctions within the medical guilds—developments simultaneous with attacks on midwives as healers from both medicine and religion, which left them vulnerable to charges of witchcraft. The handling of difficult and prob-

lematic evidence is deft in these central chapters, but the arguments remain at best probable, and it is unfortunate that Blumenfeld-Kosinski occasionally slides from what "may" or "must" have been the case to what "is" or "was."

Chapter IV is a fascinating exploration of the ways in which the popular imagination lent supernatural elements to Caesareans, with such births becoming the proving ground of both the miraculous and the demonic. The benign influence of the Virgin or female saints concerned restoring the health of the mother, while satanic intervention focused on claiming the infant as an anti-christ. A final appendix traces the confusion and controversies about the origin of the term "Caesarean birth" from the first century BC to the period under consideration.

While all of the material is extremely interesting, such a compendium inevitably lacks a certain unity, which makes it hard to know the intended audience. It seems perhaps a bit too challenging and scholarly for the truly general reader, and too diffuse for the specialized researcher or for course material. It is most likely to be useful as a teaching text at the graduate level, and even there probably as background reading.

UN PIANO DANS LE NOIR

Simone Chaput. Saint-Boniface (Manitoba): Les Éditions du Blé, 1991.

par Elizabeth Aubé

Andrée Bougard savait ce qu'elle voulait dans la vie. Pendant quinze ans, elle s'était vouée à la perfection de son talent de musicienne. Disciplinée et cérébrale, elle s'était entourée de personnes qui lui ressemblaient, en particulier Sheila, qui se donnait corps et âme à l'étude du chinois, et son amoureux Daniel, musicien de jazz consommé. Mais voilà qu'une série d'événements—un frère défroque, l'autre divorce, et une amie meurt, victime d'un acte de terrorisme—vient bousculer l'ordre qui régnait dans le monde et l'esprit