

availability and took advantage of them” (p. 15). Nicholas concludes that popular concerns about bold young women upsetting gender norms and the social order, and promises by advertisers and beauty columnists that women could achieve “social and cultural power for appearing beautiful,” were largely a fiction, as “patriarchy severely prescribed *living* the cultural narrative of erotic choice” (pp. 42, 90, 107).

Attuned to feminist debates over beauty culture, Nicholas takes care to signal the ways beauty culture and modern “techniques of appearing” could serve as a source of pleasure for women but is ultimately critical of the demand for women to live up to modern standards of beauty, the commodification of women’s bodies and the use of them to sell commodities, and a visual culture that prioritized women’s appearance and subjected their bodies to constant public scrutiny. *The Modern Girl* provides evidence of an increased emphasis on women’s physical appearance, and Nicholas suggests various explanations for this throughout the book, including the increasing reliance on visual cues in navigating the crowded urban environment (something affecting both men and women), and the role of the advertising industry in promoting bodily transformation to sell products. More disturbingly, it could function as a means of containing women’s emancipation through the requirement that they devote significant time and resources to cultivating an attractive physical appearance, only to find themselves objectified and scrutinized for their choices. *The Modern Girl* encourages the reader to reflect on the implications of modernity for women, including how the modern woman’s body is “made into a project” (p. 72) that demands time and consumer products to maintain, and the impact on “how women think about, take care of, and even see their bodies” (p. 11).

Nicholas demonstrates a mastery of secondary source literature and offers incisive analysis of her primary source material, though in places long sentences and paragraphs make the reader work to follow her analysis. The term “feminine modernities” was frequently employed but never clearly defined. Nonetheless, *The Modern Girl* is an important study and essential reading for students and scholars interested in modernity and urbanization in Canada, featuring convincing evidence of the centrality of women - both real and imagined - to these processes.

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Rossi, Maria Clara, and Marina Garbellotti, eds. 2015. *Adoption and Fosterage Practices in the Late Medieval and Modern Age*. Rome, Italy: Viella. 217 pp. €35, ISBN 978-88-6728-171-8.

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Surprisingly, adoption history still occupies only a niche in family history, notwithstanding the historical periods and countries it deals with. An exception to this observation is the United States where adoption has been given attention by pathbreaking studies by historians, sociologists, and cultural theorists alike. But at least in Europe, generally speaking, it is the case up to this time that research on historical aspects of (child) adoption and fosterage is rare, while important sociological and pedagogical work has been more widely undertaken. For this reason, it is all the more timely that this collection of essays concentrating on adoption and fosterage practices in the late medieval and modern age sets about to correct this trend. By considering particularly Italian cases, the editors and authors of this volume limit themselves to one country. However, the detailed studies on Milan, Bologna, Florence, and Naples, to name but few, illustrate the empirical richness and the theoretical and methodological value of focusing on one country while taking a long chronological perspective at the same time. It is to be hoped, therefore, that future research will look at comparative examples

from other European and possibly non-European countries thereby profiting from the rich foundations which are being provided by this volume.

Adoption history has usually focused on the family, not the child, although the principle of giving priority to the “best interests of the child” may suggest differently. Yet this is a principle that came into being only after the Second World War, while one could truly say that adoption and fosterage were historically serving individual interests of adults and families alike. Long-term perspectives from the middle ages to the twentieth century will therefore have to distinguish between the different social institutions that are involved in the process of adoption. Furthermore, the cultural implications and values will have been different at different times for which reason parenthood, whether biological and/or legal only, followed very individual paths. Adoption history thus constantly reminds us how much and how deep the history of family and childhood as well the understandings of kinship and personhood were being shaped and reformulated by the question about identity which is, of course, at the core of each individual adoptive case.

For historians, a crucial point will always be the selection of sources available for the study of adoption. While twentieth century studies can choose among a wide range of published and unpublished material, historians of the medieval and modern age are much more limited in what is suitable for their research. At this point, it needs to be clearly distinguished whether personal stories of the children or social, cultural, political, and economic stories of the wider groups involved are to be looked at. The family model and the social and cultural models of women and men have always played a significant role in understanding the dynamics of adoption. A good number of authors for this volume draw our attention to hospital archives as rich depositories of documents. This wealth of documents sheds light at the practice of adoption and at the essential question of who was responsible at what time for the “placements” of children and with what family model they were confronted when the choice was taken.

In their short introduction, the editors therefore rightly present the hospitals as agents in their capability and responsibility of assigning children to couples or individuals. Italian foundling hospitals thus formed a crucial hinge between state, society, church, and individual—with the child being primarily the object of debate. However, equally voiceless were mothers and fathers who gave their children for adoption. Historical sources are mainly silent in this respect, while children as quintessential objects of care, and their adopting parents as agents of solidarity, are given prime attention. But limiting oneself to institutional sources, such as hospital archives, could likely lead to a mere legal history of contracts. It is very important, therefore, that some of the authors of this volume point to last wills as particularly rich documents because they provide a deeper understanding of the complex emotional context associated with the adoption process. Whether a history of sentiments connected to adoption is a feasible project is a difficult question to answer. It would need to address aspects that are not easy to detect from the sources while it would confront questions that were and are highly individual thus mirroring the basic fragility with which the history of adoption points to our understandings of childhood, welfare, family, identity, private and public life, and after all, of love and care.

While modern, in particular post-Second World War, adoption history strongly touches aspects of the social environment and the process of professionalization, this is not the case for the medieval and early modern age. The child’s biological and genetic predisposition, which are given much attention in the literature of the twentieth century, are of course of very little relevance for foundling hospitals in late medieval Florence, for example. But the institutionalization and professionalization of adoption and fosterage, which can be seen as central characteristics of nineteenth- and twentieth-century developments, already played a major part in earlier periods of European adoption history in so far as hospitals cared socially and spiritually, religiously, and culturally. As bridges between the private and public spheres, they possessed a strong position in the legal transfer and thus in producing those registry books the historians are working with today.

The essays of this volume are richly based on primary source material. They address questions that seem to be familiar to historians of later periods, such as debates in late fifteenth-century Milan about the right age of the child to be “placed” in a family which we also come across again and again in twentieth-century handbooks of adoption. Infant mortality, child abandonment, charitable work, the impact of Christianity, the economic burden for the adoptive parents, the concern over providing the child with education, and the difficulty of defining effectively a legal adoption: these and many other points refer to fundamental concerns of adoption history beyond a particular chronological frame. On the other hand, this volume makes abundantly clear how much hospitals and their history stay in the center of a process of integrating children into new households and finding a place for them within the society. Because legal documents are scarce which explicitly state the formal adoption and translate the family name and inheritance to a child, research will continue to look deeper into the emotional history of forming a bond between hitherto strangers which is so much more than just a paper document.

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Pooley, Siân, and Kaveri Qureshi, eds. 2016. *Parenthood between Generations: Transforming Reproductive Cultures*. New York: Berghahn Books. 298 pp. £67.00/\$95.00, ISBN 978 1 78533 150 3

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This excellent edited collection of ten chapters focuses on the process of transmission of parenting cultures between generations. The editors, Siân Pooley and Kaveri Qureshi, offer up a new framework for thinking about these often unsaid and intangible practices of communication between parents and children, and parents and grandparents as well as different generations of other kin. The focus is on adult children—and so the volume provides a welcome addition to the literature, by examining what happens to the parent–child relationship later in the life course of both child and parent, through the prism of intergenerational relations, and specifically the transmission of parental values. As Pooley and Qureshi highlight, “[p]eople do not stop being parents when their children grow up” (p. 11). This is a study, then, as the authors acknowledge, about (prospective) grandparenthood as much as parenting and parenthood.

In the introduction, Pooley and Qureshi provide a valuable overview of the literature on the transmission of parental knowledge, skills, and values through generations. The conceptualization of key terms such as reproduction, generation, and parenting/parenthood/parents is sophisticated, here and throughout the book. Parenthood and parenting are conceptualized as multilayered, involving the practical activities of a care relationship, but also emotional labor, responsibility, and decision-making as well as being a skill, a position of authority, and an identity. This allows for nuanced analysis of the changing meanings of parenting within families, and different generations. This in-depth discussion of the literature and key concepts within it, crossing history, sociology, and anthropology among other disciplines, is matched by a theoretical framework for understanding the very *processes* of transmission, as opposed to its outcomes that are, as the editors highlight, usually the focus of research. These four processes are implicit normative expectations, moral judgment, habituation, and memory, which variously relate to the implicit and explicit discussion of what reproduction, childcare, and parenting behaviors should involve, as well as embodied practices and the place of memory in constructing roles and identities as parents. The editors provide a helpful summary of how the following chapters contribute to this framework, and which authors engage with which processes (p. 22). The book is structured on these lines, rather than by geographical area or