

with hyperbole. In some instances Dalrymple's views and expression of language seem to be a throwback to those times when laudanum was the recommended treatment for alcoholism. Dalrymple's approach will make the book a tedious read for those who, like me, enjoy the

beauty of simple English prose. I would prefer to be persuaded by the substance of a book's content rather than by its stylistic flourishes. I realise that my criticisms may only serve as encouragement to the author or, worse, provide a spur to justify his views of those dedicated to scholarly

pursuits to improve the lives of addicts. Indeed, that would be ironic.

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In brief

Book Traumatic childbirth

When I was 35 weeks pregnant I went to the maternity ward because I was concerned that I had not felt my baby move for 24 hours. I was admitted and given an internal examination. I was not in labour so thought the procedure unnecessary and degrading. After reading *Birth Crisis*, I can now view it as an initiation rite carried out by "high priests" in ceremonial dress to whom I had surrendered my individuality.

Drawing on religious, military, and industrial metaphors, as well as a plethora of theoretical perspectives, Sheila Kitzinger launches a sustained attack on childbirth practices. If she is to be believed, the "carnality of birth" means that some women will be traumatised by the experience of giving birth. She suggests that these women may feel a loss of control; become detached from their genitals; experience inner turmoil, flashbacks, panic attacks; hate their babies; not be able to have sex; want to avoid getting pregnant again; and ultimately suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Kitzinger does not define PTSD, and in attempting to validate PTSD as a sequela of distressing childbirth she seems to create two crucial problems that, ironically, she seeks to condemn. First, by encouraging women to interpret their reactions to stressful childbirth in terms of PTSD Kitzinger is, inadvertently, promoting a blame culture. Second, the demotion of

women's experiences into medical labels such as PTSD will serve only to further medicalise women's lives. Moreover, although Kitzinger is critical of tokophobia—the morbid fear of birth—as a new illness, the stories in this book would seem to add to the number of cases.

Certainly this is not a book for would-be mothers, but it may help women who have had traumatic births put their experiences into context. *Birth Crisis* is a passionate and personal account that is sometimes humorous and often horrifying but there is little here that is new. However, it is always worth reiterating the effects of ideology, language, and protocol on perceptions of labour and the disempowerment of labouring women.

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Exhibition Smoking cartoons

American addiction to tobacco and the money it generates is brought into sharp focus in *Cartoonists Take Up Smoking*. The 50 cartoonists featured in this exhibition lampoon company executives and advertisers, the lawyers who made millions through suits against tobacco companies, and governments that supplemented their incomes through cigarette taxes and legal settlements.

All these cartoons were published in the 40 years since a landmark Surgeon General's report definitively



connected smoking with lung cancer. The release officially heralded the USA's effort to kick the tobacco habit, a campaign that continues today. In their desperation to attract customers, tobacco companies targeted women, minorities, and even children. Some of the original advertisements are displayed alongside cartoonists' take on them. Physicians are not spared: many doctors smoked well into the 1950s and were even used in advertising. A 1946 advert trumpeted "More doctors smoke Camels than any other cigarettes."

Although heavy handed at times, the exhibition powerfully illustrates the devil's bargain the US struck with the deadly weed and how difficult it has been to break the deal despite the devastating toll on public health.

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Birth Crisis
Sheila Kitzinger. Routledge,
2006. Pp 160. £12.99.
ISBN 0-415-37266-6.



Cartoonists Take Up Smoking
The National Museum of Health
and Medicine, Washington DC,
USA, until March 31, 2007. See
<http://nmhm.washingtondc.museum/news/cartoonist.html>