



PROJECT MUSE®

---

Cinq Livres, de la manière de nourrir et gouverner les  
enfants dès leur naissance (review)

Ilana Zinguer, Sheila J. Rabin

Renaissance Quarterly, Volume 60, Number 1, Spring 2007, pp. 213-214  
(Review)

Published by Renaissance Society of America



➔ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/212705>

Ed. Colette H. Winn. Simon de Vallambert. *Cinq Livres, de la manière de nourrir et gouverner les enfants dès leur naissance.*

Cahiers d'Humanisme et Renaissance 74. Geneva: Librairie Droz S. A., 2005. 512 pp. index. append. illus. gloss. chron. bibl. €86.47. ISBN: 2-600-01029-7.

Colette Winn's latest work is impressive as much for its methodological objectives as for the clarity of its presentation. The theoretical focus, which is outlined in the introduction, is on sociology and medicine, particularly in the first half of the sixteenth century. The articulation of the issues and problems, the chapter titles in the introduction, the discussion of Simon Vallambert and the great medical debates of his time, as well as the problems proposed and resolved, are handled in a very detailed study of the state of pediatrics.

Winn's introduction closely follows the text: she explores the issue of pediatrics and its forerunners in order to better understand and to justify its importance — equivalents are found in the various studies and books dedicated to problems of health such as melancholy or old age. Winn presents birth by taking into account current ideas on the subject: sources, critiques, medical progress, and women's rights and status. The reader experiences giving birth in the sixteenth century. Winn points out Vallambert's innovations and originality, his distinctive traditions and conventions, and his proposals for new practices, all of which reconstruct the conditions of child-rearing. The physician-author did not face the same problems as other writers: Vallambert, in particular, was caught up in the rhetorical and linguistic needs of his time. Until the end of the century, few books of science and medicine were written in the vernacular: most authors wrote in Latin. Vallambert decided to write in French so that wetnurses and midwives could read him. Jacques Duval, another pediatrician, did likewise, but it is remarkable that his book is not mentioned among those on the education of children. We should recall in this regard that Rabelais, in the *Tiers livre*, also endorsed a model that mixed dialogue with philosophical debate, and the name of Vallambert is explicitly mentioned. On the other hand, the pediatrician had a great interest in rhetoric: he wrote *De optimo genere disputandi colloquendique*, inspired by Cicero's *Orator*, representing the Ciceronian distinction between public and private eloquence. At no point are these medical works boring or unreadable, as difficult medical terms are not used. One marvels at Vallambert's attention to the medical, as well as the social details. The themes that structure the work include the debate over nursing and wetnursing, instructions for midwives, the health regimen for children, tradition and innovation, childhood pathology and possible classifications of illnesses and their treatments, common afflictions, and contagious illnesses.

Vallambert addressed the issue of women's health using all the arguments of the time. He paired female sexual identity with knowledge of childbirth and maternity, and established a more modern view of the subject. He succeeded during a time in the history of medicine when anatomical-medical works regarding women were mostly mumbling. The medical discourse does not, however,

overwhelm the moral discourse in order to preserve the proper social status of women. In contrast to biological mothers, who nurse their infants, wetnurses frequently appear incompetent and lacking in moral integrity. The debate then presents exciting social issues like nursing, placing infants with wetnurses, hygiene and the risks of contagion, and hereditary contagion (syphilis), reflecting the state of medical knowledge at this time. This, then, is what Winn, in her commentaries and explications, reveals to us about the different scientific discussions regarding practical care in the different social classes of the time.

The rigorous establishment of the text, with abundant, detailed explanatory and historical notes, with rich and judicious commentaries using modern and contemporary criticism, provides the reader with ample knowledge of all the subjects treated by pediatrics. In this way, each of the branches of medicine is put in its historical and scientific context. *Cinq Livres, de la manière de nourrir et gouverner les enfans dès leur naissance*, as organized by Winn, presents pediatric medicine of the sixteenth century in its entirety, under the control of solid sources and contemporary social facts. The different illustrations reveal children under the care of women and experts. The examples are well-chosen. The glossary assembles medical and pharmaceutical terms of the time, but to keep the word *cistre* from being linked with *clystere*, it is necessary to classify the categories.

In sum, this work yields much about the convergence of the history of medicine, the history of ideas, and the sociology of childhood. The medical is reconciled with the cultural and sociological, making the *Cinq Livres* a work of a new era in pediatrics and medicine that has no absolute rules except those that follow nature and the character of each child. The publication of this modern work was a real scientific achievement in an era that renewed pediatrics with ancient medicine.

ILANA ZINGUER

Haifa Univerity

Translation, SHEILA J. RABIN

St. Peter's College

David Lederer. *Madness, Religion and the State in Early Modern Europe: A Bavarian Beacon*.

New Studies in European History. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. xx + 362 pp. index. illus. tbs. map. bibl. \$90. ISBN: 0-521-85347-8.

Professor Lederer's focus is spiritual physic — religious medicine applied to sufferers of a range of moral disorders — and he provides a cultural history of early modern psychiatry in seventeenth-century Catholic Bavaria. Included is a panoramic view of the history of mental health theory and practice from the sixteenth-century Aristotelian *de anima* renaissance and moral casuistry, which connected moral comportment with one's spiritual health, to later bourgeois psychiatry, Mesmerism, and, in a provocative closing excursus, to Freud's interest in seventeenth-century demonology.