

scope” (p. 117). Given these issues, it is difficult to give *Literature in the Age of Celestial Discovery* an unqualified recommendation. That said, the volume offers valuable insights into a range of fascinating materials, making good on the editor’s promise to “demonstrate . . . the vast field of possibilities” (p. 15) opened up by studies into the relationships between literature and astronomy in the early modern period.

Alexander Wragge-Morley

Alexander Wragge-Morley holds a Leverhulme Early Career Research Fellowship in the Department of History at University College London. He works on the role of aesthetic experience in early modern natural philosophy and is currently finishing his first book, Aesthetic Science: Representing Nature in the Royal Society of London, 1650–1720.

Robin E. Jensen. *Infertility: Tracing the History of a Transformative Term.* (RSA Series in Transdisciplinary Rhetoric.) xiii + 225 pp., figs., bibl., index. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016. \$29.95 (paper).

Once, when I was working in the office of my research collaborator, an obstetrician/gynecologist, one of her residents stopped by to talk about a pregnant patient. When the resident mentioned the patient’s “EDC,” I asked whether he knew what those initials meant. He looked at me, puzzled, and said, “Her delivery date,” to which I responded, “Do you know what those letters stand for?” Now he was really perplexed. It had never occurred to him that they stood for anything. My collaborator, recognizing a teachable moment when she saw one, said, “It means ‘estimated date of confinement.’” Then we proceeded to explain, probably in more detail than he wanted to hear, how the term “confinement” came to be used to encapsulate the experience of labor and delivery in an earlier era of Western medicine.

EDC is not the only archaic term currently in use in medicine. The leading American journal in reproductive medicine is—still—called *Fertility and Sterility*. The organization publishing the journal has undergone two name changes since it was founded in 1944 as the American Society for the Study of Sterility; it is now the American Society for Reproductive Medicine. The journal, however, retains the name under which it first appeared in 1950.

How much should it matter, and to whom, if obstetricians continue to use “EDC” to refer to a woman’s expected delivery date, or that twenty-first-century reproductive specialists, devoted to the development and use of the most up-to-date technologies, subscribe to a journal that employs in its title a long-outmoded term for infertility? Robin E. Jensen does not mention either of these examples, but the larger question they evoke hovers over *Infertility: Tracing the History of a Transformative Term*. Jensen’s book offers a rhetorical analysis of the terms used historically—and in the present—to describe infertility. The author is a communications scholar, and her book is not a history of infertility as a medical condition. Rather, it is a study of the ways in which “infertility . . . has been constructed rhetorically through diverse arguments, appeals, and narratives over time and at particular historical moments.” Jensen provides, in her words, a “kaiology” of infertility via the “study of historical moments as rhetorical opportunities” (p. 3). Jensen examines the rhetorical significance of terms used to understand infertility—examples include “barrenness,” “sterility,” “psychogenic infertility,” the “biological clock”—and the ways in which their use persisted, altered, or disappeared in subsequent eras.

The book includes five chapters focused on historically contingent metaphors, descriptors, and tropes used by physicians, journalists, and others to explain infertility both to those suffering from the condition and to the public, beginning with an analysis of the terminology applied to a person unable to reproduce. The “barren” woman of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries gave way, with the development of gynecology in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, to the problem of “sterility,” which was replaced by

the condition of “infertility” in the mid- to late twentieth century. As a historian, I have explored the medical, social, and cultural significance of these changes in terminology; Jensen, however, has a different point to make. The distinctive contribution of this book is its examination of the rhetorical constructions used over time to define infertility. These constructs, she argues, continue to place conflicting burdens on the infertile. For example, in examining the rhetoric used to describe assisted reproductive technologies in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries, she perceives a “larger historical trajectory, wherein fertility is upheld as natural or artificial.” This “dichotomy,” she notes, “supports only two, oversimplified, subject positions for women in particular. If fertility is natural . . . one who is infertile is a woman who has somehow thwarted this natural design.” But “if fertility is artificial . . . one who is infertile is quite separated from that process and requires the intervention of a technical expert to achieve relief” (p. 166).

Historians, whose work allows and sometimes even requires them to examine the findings of researchers in fields well beyond their own, are regularly reminded of the profound impact that disciplinary training has on the ways in which a scholar interprets evidence, frames an argument, or evaluates the context in which discoveries occur and historical processes unfold. Jensen’s book, which will likely have the greatest appeal for historians with an interest in theory and method, further demonstrates the significance and value of cross-disciplinary inquiry to the history of science and medicine.

Margaret Marsh

Margaret Marsh is Distinguished Professor of History and University Professor at Rutgers University. Her most recent book, coauthored with gynecologist Wanda Ronner, is The Fertility Doctor: John Rock and the Reproductive Revolution (Johns Hopkins, 2008). Her current project, also with Ronner, is a recent and contemporary history of assisted reproduction in the United States.

Miles A. Kimball; Charles Kostelnick (Editors). *Visible Numbers: Essays on the History of Statistical Graphics*. (Ashgate Studies in Technical Communication, Rhetoric, and Culture.) xxi + 291 pp., figs., tables, bibl., index. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2016. £95 (cloth).

The modern world is a world of numbers. From the time we rise in the morning until we fall asleep, we are greeted by a virtual avalanche of graphs, maps, diagrams, charts, statistics, and other devices that inform us about any number of conditions, developments, and happenings. They help us to understand complex phenomena quickly, transforming the work of reading into the pleasure of seeing. For many years, these numeric representations were often treated as absolute truths, creating a powerful and persuasive form of communication. More recently, however, scholars have begun to look at these representations more critically, noting that their production and organization are often deeply linked to the social, political, and cultural contexts in which they are produced.

Miles Kimball and Charles Kostelnick’s *Visible Numbers* continues this work of deconstruction, teasing out the historical development of various forms of graphic communication. Taking a postmodern approach to this too often ignored historiography, they (and their contributors) begin to problematize the notion of a linear or progressive path of development for these devices. Moving away from celebrations of major achievements or figures in the history of the subject, they focus instead on complexity, the various twists and turns, the successes but especially the failures encountered in the development of contemporary standards for visualizing information.

The book is divided into three sections, each of which addresses a different field of statistical communication. The first section focuses on health and bodies, an area that has attracted considerable scholarly interest over the years (not surprisingly, considering its key role as a site of statistical breakthrough in the mid-nineteenth century). Here we are greeted with essays on evolutionary biology, Florence Nightingale’s