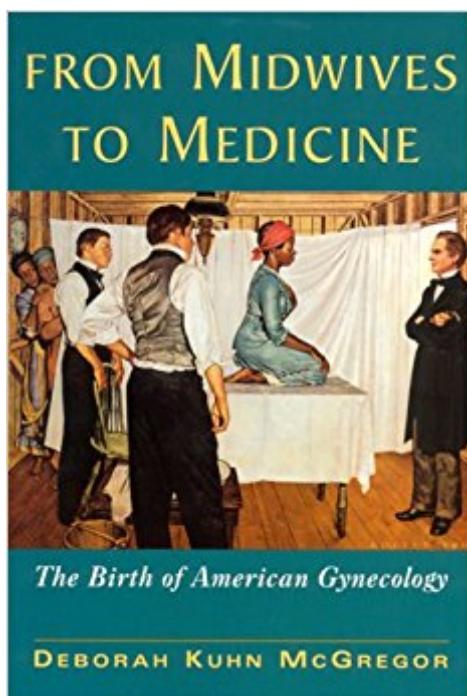


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From Midwives To Medicine: The Birth Of American Gynecology



Synopsis

An examination of the development of modern medical treatment of women and the related history of women's health in the mid-1800s. McGregor looks not only at the medical figure who devised and practiced the innovative therapies, but also at the history of the patient experience in the development and the professionalization of the medical specialty. In exploring the controversial career of J. Marion Sims, the father of gynaecology, and the history of the Woman's Hospital of the State of New York, McGregor chronicles the emergence of a practice involving previously untried medical techniques and the use of experimentation on patients according to a social hierarchy based on race and sex. Using patient records and archival material from the female governors and administrators at the hospital, the study shows how a new medical practice developed out of the changing patterns and historical experiences of childbirth, as well as out of the context of the social relations of the sexes.

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"McGregor deftly contextualizes the struggles of medical science and experimentation within the social, sexual, and cultural landscape of the nineteenth century." - John S. Haller, Jr., Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. -- John S. Haller, Jr., Southern Illinois University, Carbondale "This innovative study of the early years of American gynecological practice deftly weaves together the career of J. Marion Sims and his medical contemporaries with accounts of female reform and institution-building, the haphazard story of surgical innovation, and, importantly, the fraught historical

intersections of gender, race, and class. -- Author of *Conduct Unbecoming a Woman: Gynecology Trial in Turn-of-the-Century Brooklyn* -Regina Morantz-Sanchez -- Author of *Conduct Unbecoming a Woman: Gynecology Trial in Turn-of-the-Century Brooklyn* -Regina Morantz-Sanchez

From *Midwives to Medicine* examines the development of modern medical treatment of women and the related history of women's health in the mid-1800s. McGregor looks not only at the medical figures who devised and practiced the innovative therapist, but also at the history of the patient experience in the development and the professionalization of a medical specialty. In exploring the controversial career of J. Marion Sims, "the father of gynecology." And the history of the Woman's Hospital of the State of New York. McGregor chronicles the emergence of a practice involving previously untried medical techniques and the use of experimentation on patients according to a social hierarchy based on race and sex. Using patient records and archival material from the female governors and administrators at the hospital. From *Midwives to Medicine* shows how a new medical practice developed out of the changing patterns and historical experiences of childbirth, as well as out of the context of the social relations of the sexes. Sims' patients were slave women in the antebellum South, poor Irish immigrants in the industrial North, and upper-class white, Protestant, Manhattan socialites who sought help for their "hysterical" symptoms. During his career, which began in the South and flourished at the Women's Hospital in New York. Sims performed and perfected his technique to "cure" vesico-vaginal fistulas, the tears of childbirth, from which so many women suffered. But Sims achieved these successes on the operating table only after years of practicing his "silver suture" technique on unanesthetized slave women, who he believed "by the nature of their race... had a specific physiological tolerance for pain unknown to whites."

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