

## Book Reviews

but the authors seem unfortunately to have been given no opportunity to amend or reconsider them. Regrettable also in such a diverse collection is the absence of an index. The papers are very variable in quality, too often over-long, and with frequently excellent data employed in largely descriptive presentations confined to single localities, lacking context or even an attempt to assess wider implications. Much of the work reported is clearly in the early stages and some of the papers, like Nyström's interesting discussion of long-term changes in the classification of causes of death, are more research agenda than peices of substantive research.

However, permeating the contributions as a whole is a welcome and multi-faceted concern with the role of cultural factors as influences on the impact of disease and therefore on mortality. In the 1970s, historical demographers were forced to recognize that the prime determinants of fertility were socio-cultural. In the 1980s, they are now also to a great extent seeing mortality a social variable. Thus, local variations in practices of breast-feeding become a key influence on infant deaths, patterns of alcohol consumption a major factor affecting national differences in death rates for middle-aged men, the domestic division of labour produces gendering of mortality at certain ages, national differences in attitudes to syphilis lead to an apparent greater sympathy in Scandinavia towards hospitals seeing its treatment as a high priority. Other important cultural elements which are stressed include choice of food and, even more importantly, methods of preservation and storage (what was the impact of all that salt used for preservation?), and folk remedies and palliatives (those opiates used to calm children were not only the outcome of a particular socially- and economically-induced drug technology but also reflect beliefs about appropriate behaviour among adults and children). At another level, even a willingness to invest resources in attempts to reduce mortality not only reflects historically-specific ideologies about priorities and attitudes to life and death but also a belief, at least among opinion leaders, that those who claim to be experts actually do know how to reduce disease and its impact. And, finally, several papers nicely remind us of how, especially in a historical context, the differing objectives of compilers, current medical theory, lay beliefs, and access to information are all at work in socially shaping the statistics on causes of death that so many demographers have spent so much time in analysing as if they were Durkheimian "facts". In sum, among the dross, there are some useful insights for those with the determination to mine them.

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P. J. and R. V. WALLIS, with the assistance of J. G. L. BURNBY and T. D. WHITTET, *Eighteenth century medics (subscriptions, licences, apprenticeships)*, 2nd ed., Newcastle upon Tyne, Project for Historical Biobibliography [43 Briarfield Rd., Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 3UH], dist. Vade-Mecum Press Ltd., 1988, 4to, pp. xlvi, 690, illus., £80.00, \$160.00.

Since the publication of its first edition in 1985, *Eighteenth century medics* has become an invaluable research and reference tool for all scholars directly or indirectly pursuing the history of medicine. This monumental work—a testament to the heroic labours of the Wallises and their helpers—has now appeared in a second edition, extended, corrected, and in a format easier to use. It deserves to be more widely known.

In form, it is an alphabetical index of towards 100,000 individuals connected with the practice of medicine—or at least known to have had an interest in it—in eighteenth-century Britain. The list has been brought together from a variety of sources, printed and manuscript (amongst the latter, perhaps most valuably of all, from the registers of apprenticeships held at the Public Record Office and at the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine). Each entry, standardly occupying a single line, contains information on birth and death dates, branch of the profession (apothecary, physician, druggist, veterinary surgeon, etc.), apprenticeship details (where relevant), site of practice, and keys to further information (listed in the bibliography). Obviously, in many instances, certain items are lacking; and the diversity of sources drawn upon inevitably means a degree of duplication—indeed conflict—of information. Frequently, the same individual crops up in various places with his name differently spelt. As the editors warn, the reader must use these data with intelligence and care.

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For all the obvious hazards and problems of using such a compilation, it is an extraordinary resource. It should surely provide the basis for a much-needed prosopography of the medical trade in the pre-reform era. The sheer proliferation of numbers (there are clearly well over 35,000 medical practitioners, in the narrow sense, listed here) provides ample confirmation of the arguments, recently adduced by Joan Lane, Irvine Loudon, Geoffrey Holmes, and others, that the practice of medicine was burgeoning in Georgian England—the trade was perhaps even becoming overstocked. Moreover, the Wallises' data demonstrate the extraordinary richness and variety of medical practice: army and navy surgeons abound, as do chemists and druggists, horse-doctors, tradesmen who double as booksellers and apothecaries, and, not least, women practitioners (far from all of whom are midwives). It is no surprise that some operators principally identified themselves as “inoculators”; it is intriguing to find other practitioners listed as “phlebotomists”. In the early years of the “consumer economy”, medicine, far from languishing, or being constrained by the traditional hierarchical pyramid of apothecary, surgeon, and physician, evidently flourished in tropical abundance, before the pruning action performed by Victorian professional reform.

This index is a magnificent research tool which should help sustain the recent revival of interest in eighteenth-century medical history. Its authors deserve our grateful thanks.

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M. J. van LIEBURG and H. A. M. SNELDERS, *'De bevordering en volmaking der proefondervindelijke wijsbegeerte': de rol van het Bataafsche Genootschap te Rotterdam in de geschiedenis van de natuurwetenschappen, geneeskunde en techniek (1769–1988)* [‘The advancement and perfection of experimental philosophy’: the role of the Batavian Society of Rotterdam in the history of the natural sciences, medicine and technology], Amsterdam and Atlanta, Rodopi, 1989, 4to, pp. 270, illus., Dfl. 60.00.

The Batavian Society was set up in Rotterdam in 1769, and was very much a part of the urban, male, upper-class dilettante fashion of the European Enlightenment. The word “Batavian” in its title is significant: it refers to the largely mythical Germanic tribe which revolted against the Roman occupation of the Low Countries, and from which the Dutch used to like to think they were descended. The Batavian Society, then, was a national Dutch scientific society, with more than local pretensions. For the last 220 years the Society has held essay competitions, published its proceedings, arranged courses for the public, awarded prizes, subsidized research and corresponded with individuals and institutions at home and abroad. Louis Pasteur himself was a member. This handsome book traces the development of the Society, first in a general historical-descriptive chapter (by both authors), and then by a series of chapters covering either the natural sciences and technology (Snelders) or the medical activities of the Society (Van Lieburg) in various periods. The two authors join up again for a final chapter on the Society since 1945. For those who do not read Dutch, there is little help: no list of contents or summary in a more universal language. The authors claim in their preface to be writing the Society's history both in terms of the history of science, and of the history of societies and associations, which is undergoing a golden age at present, especially in the Netherlands. Societies like the *Bataafsche Genootschap* often have meticulously preserved archives, and are excellent hunting grounds for the fashionable *histoire des mentalités*. The authors of this book take up some of these opportunities in their study, while readily admitting that there is still a great deal of work yet to be done. They delve into such things as the introduction of steam power to the Netherlands, the outbursts of contagious diseases which plagued the later part of the eighteenth century, the Society's links with the “Patriot” revolutionary politics of the 1780s, and the Masonic connection. This is a well researched book in celebration of the long life of the Society which commissioned the work; on occasion it goes beyond that and offers a highly readable contribution to the history of science, medicine, and technology.

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