

## Book Reviews

tion, and thereafter the wider environment – air and river pollution, industrial diseases and housing conditions.

The subject of public health is a large one, and Professor Wohl's canvas is broad. The book is based on readily available general sources, and the thoughtful reader will inevitably become aware of a number of omissions and inadequacies that betray the extent to which the author's imagination has been limited by his source material. There is no mention, for example, of the Port Sanitary authorities that performed so vital a part in keeping Britain virtually free from cholera after 1867. The author's curiosity has not led him to supplement the deficiencies of other secondary sources: thus he is unable to comment on the disagreement between Norman Longmate and F. B. Smith as to whether tracheotomy was used on diphtheria cases in this period. One may search in vain for an account of the development of refuse collection services, or of quality controls on fresh meat, fish, and greenstuffs. Although a whole chapter is devoted to the pollution of rivers, there is no discussion of the relationship between the rivers and domestic water supplies. Professor Wohl repeatedly laments the failure of PhD students to make use of the records of Medical Officers of Health: judicious use of these records might have contributed a further dimension to his own writings.

Defects in the overall structure of the book are complemented by a number of misprints or solecisms in the text, which might be misleading to the non-specialist reader. Obsolete Victorian chemical terms are used – bichromatic of potash, for example, for potassium dichromate (p. 276). This reviewer puzzled for some time over the implications of the destruction of the "navel septum" (*ibid.*) before realizing that "navel" should read "nasal". The MAB hospitals were officially opened to all comers in 1889, not 1899 (p. 377, note 108). Instances such as these could be multiplied.

Although this is a serviceable book for the general reader, there are many loose ends, and the index is perfunctory. It is also disappointing that Professor Wohl avoids both controversy and originality. There are no fresh insights to stimulate those working in the field; and those already familiar with the sources from which Professor Wohl derives his text will find this book a pedestrian reference work.

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GEORGE D. SUSSMAN, *Selling mothers' milk. The wet-nursing business in France 1715–1914*, Urbana, Chicago, and London, University of Illinois Press, 1982, 8vo, pp. x, 310, £14.45.

It was fortuitous that George Sussman stumbled on the evidence of babies and wet-nurses whilst carrying out his research on cholera. The evidence is inevitably patchy and is drawn from government papers, literature, medical books, parish documents, and some interesting case histories. Although spanning two centuries, the work has been successfully pulled together. The author clearly recognizes the dilemma that mothers faced rearing infants within the traditional cultural and socio-economic milieu, until a breakthrough in infant feeding emerged.

Part one starts in 1715, when the wet-nursing business was already established, and deals with the effects of the Enlightenment. Part two carries us from the Revolution and Roussel Law through the nineteenth century to the First World War. The book is the right length for the pioneer work it covers, the figures are clear, and the fine illustrations are appropriate for the subject of mothers, babies, *meneurs* and wet-nurses in history.

George Sussman's sympathetic treatment has gone a long way towards reversing the trend of thought that dubbed good mothering unequivocally an invention of modernization. It illuminates the problems that mothers of yesterday and today have, when embedded in tradition and faced with economic depression, in rearing infants. Many French mothers of the period "sold the only thing they had left to sell".

The delicate subject of breast feeding has been to a great extent, perhaps because of the sexual connotations now associated with the bosom, passed over by both male and childless female historians. Industrialization in France was chronologically and conceptually different from England, and the book perhaps throws light on the perplexing subject of why the heyday of

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wet-nursing in England appears to be in the seventeenth century when the urban growth of London in particular presented mothers with similar problems regarding their infants. Evidence for bureaucratic intervention, however, is lacking in England.

The conclusion of the author that economic pressure was the predominant cause in the rise and decline of wet-nursing is convincing. The sheer intensity of the business supports the theory that mothers, often poorly fed, sold their milk and were often ruthlessly exploited by middlemen and some female *meneuses*. It is to be hoped that this excellent book will encourage further research into the field of conflict between maternal instincts and economic necessity.

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G. E. R. LLOYD, *Science, folklore and ideology: studies in the life sciences in Ancient Greece*. Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. xi, 260, £25.00 (£8.95 paperback).

This work consists of twelve essays on the "life sciences" between the sixth century BC and the second century AD. They are arranged to form three separate studies: on zoological taxonomy, theories and treatment of women from the Hippocratic corpus until after Aristotle, and developments in three specific areas of medicine (pharmacology, anatomy, and gynaecology).

These three areas are in turn linked by a common theme, suggested in the title; that is, how ancient "science" and "folklore", although often self-consciously separated by their proponents, nevertheless shared an "ideology", a set of assumptions about such subjects as the central place of man in the universe, and the nature of woman as an incomplete form. Although "science" sometimes analysed these assumptions and rejected them from its discourse, it was often itself so embedded within the world-view which they supported that they remained unchallenged. This complex picture of reciprocal influence and support replaces that of a few superstitious "survivals" within an otherwise pure "science".

In an excellent introduction, which deserves a wider audience, Lloyd proposes *using*, rather than merely bemoaning, the "loaded" nature of the ancient sources. This recalls the maxim of Adorno, "The splinter in your eye is the best magnifying-glass" (*Minima Moralia*). The section on women illustrates this. All Hippocratic texts were written by men but, rather than wishing women's views survived, we can use the texts to see how the ideology of women as inferiors interacted with the male writers' experience of women as patients. Lloyd also traces those theories of woman's role in reproduction which ran contrary to this dominant ideology.

Throughout the book an impressively wide range of the humanities is drawn upon both to furnish a conceptual framework and to make comparisons. Thus in the third section, on the relationship of Theophrastus, Pliny, Soranus, and Rufus to popular beliefs and to earlier written sources, Lloyd makes effective use of recent work in anthropology and history on the importance of literacy in the transmission of knowledge. There is also a commendable reluctance to apply modern categories to ancient thought, including an acknowledgement that the category of the "life sciences" was itself not familiar to the Greeks.

Lloyd's latest book is therefore a model of eclectic methodology, giving a fascinating picture of ancient views of animals, man, and medicine at the interface of popular belief and philosophy, of folklore and science, of ideology and criticism.

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J. BÜTTNER (editor), *History of clinical chemistry*, Berlin and New York, Walter de Gruyter, 1983, 4to, pp. 91, illus., DM. 98.00.

Writing in 1851, Henry Bence Jones looked back to the experiments of A. L. Lavoisier on pneumatic chemistry some seventy years previously as symbolizing a first *rapprochement* between physiology and chemistry proper. According to Bence Jones, doctors needed to understand the workings of the body in chemical terms. Such knowledge was legitimately the province of medicine – "it ought", he wrote, "to be possessed by those who attempt to understand and regulate an apparatus that only works while oxygen is going into it and carbonic acid coming out of it."