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nineteenth-century antecedents to the National Health Service reorganization of 1974. It is a worthy, highly detailed, scrupulously documented, and very thorough account of the ups and downs of a social service; and it is terribly dull, and in places most laboriously written.

The first chapter proper, which relates the impact of the report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration of 1904, sets an ominous stage for what is to come. It borrows no zest from, for example, Dorothy Porter's lively essay on doctors and deterioration ('Enemies of race', *Victorian Studies*, 1991—not listed in Harris's bibliography) but regurgitates in paraphrase and direct quotation chunks of evidence from the Committee minutes, prefaced by leaden lead-ins: 'He considered that', 'He wrote that', 'He claimed that', 'He argued that', and so on.

The bitterness of these complaints springs from my own disappointment with this book. Bernard Harris is an able historian, who has written lucid and compelling articles on anthropometric history, one of which at least has achieved classic status. What is it about twentieth-century administrative/social policy history that stifles the historian's imagination, and turns a stylish pen turgid as ancient ink? Maybe the problem lies in the material—in the overwhelming wealth of data on administrative and political minutiae which has survived in official papers and professional journals. Such plenty too easily overcomes the historian's wider view of the wood, as distinct from the trees, of his chosen subject area; just as sheer volume and constraints of time compel him to narrow his range of sources. Reconceptualized as a history of children's health, in which the school medical service played a more or less significant part, this might have been an altogether livelier volume.

A greater range of sources might have both broadened and enriched this account. Oral history, surely, could have furnished a contribution, as could non-official writings—memoirs and novels. Some feeling for the wider historical context of the material presented would also have been welcome. How

could Harris baldly present a paragraph on the improvement of childrens' teeth during World War II (p. 171) without some mention of the impact of rationing on the manufacture and consumption of sweets, and of the world of child preferences and family values which lay behind the peacetime carious teeth? Harris is sceptical about the overall impact of the school medical service, which expended most of its energies in inspecting children above anything else; it is a pity that he did not achieve the broader and more informed account of childrens' health in the twentieth century which his main title implies.

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Martin Dinges (ed.), *Weltgeschichte der Homöopathie. Länder—Schulen—Heilkundige*, Munich, C H Beck, 1996, pp. 445, illus., DM 58.00 (3-406-40700-5).

In his book *Facts and fallacies in the name of science* (1952; 2nd ed., 1957), Martin Gardner dismissed homeopathy as a form of quackery, identifying it as the "first medical cult of any importance in America"; homeopathy's founder, the German medical doctor Christian Friedrich Samuel Hahnemann (1755–1843), was made a figure of fun, and his main book, *Organon der rationellen Heilkunde* (1810), a source of ridicule; devotees of homeopathy were put down as superstitious simpletons, to be bracketed with believers in flying saucers.

Much has changed in the approximately four decades since Gardner derided the father and followers of homeopathy. No longer used as a source of ridicule, they have become the subject of serious and first-rate historical scholarship. Nothing could illustrate the new state of affairs better than the splendid collection of seventeen contributions of this volume, competently edited, introduced and provided with a concluding chapter by the Stuttgart historian Martin Dinges.

What has brought about this fundamental shift in the appreciation of homeopathy's antecedents? *Weltgeschichte der Homöopathie*

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provides us with several answers. First, in recent decades there has been a revival of homeopathic medicine, especially in Germany. The renewed popularity among patients of homeopathic remedies must at least in part be attributed to dissatisfaction with “scientific medicine”, the élite of which seems primarily interested in modern medicine’s technical tools; as Roy Porter put it in his perceptive analysis on ‘How medicine became a prisoner of its success’ (*TLS*, 14 Jan. 1994, pp. 3–4): “Where patients are seen as problems and reduced to biopsies and lab tests, no wonder sections of the public vote with their feet, and opt for styles of holistic medicine that present themselves as more humane”.

Second, the historiography of medicine itself has changed, and with its broadened scope of “medical culture in society” has begun to give serious consideration to unorthodox medical theories as well as folk medicine and non-Western medical traditions. Whatever the merits of homeopathy may be, it is a fact that practitioners and patients have in large numbers and in many different countries practised its precepts. This asks for historical explanations, and the *Weltgeschichte der Homöopathie* provides these, for a wide range of European countries (Germany, France, Austria, Switzerland, Poland, Denmark, the Netherlands and Belgium, Great Britain, Spain, Italy, Romania), for the USA and Canada, as well as for Brazil and, the “late homeopathic superpower”, India.

A third reason for the historiographical rehabilitation of homeopathy—a reason, not mentioned in so many words in this volume—has been the financial clout of the Robert Bosch Foundation in Stuttgart and its Institute for the History of Medicine—clout used in support of a research programme to put Hahnemann and his tradition on the historical map. Both the editor and one of the principal contributors, Robert Jütte, are members of the Institute. They are historians-with-a-mission, and the emphasis of the book on homeopathy as a global movement is not only a matter of factual documentation, but serves to legitimize present-day homeopathic medicine.

This connection with the current affairs of alternative medical practice has not diminished the scholarly quality of the collection. The scholarship is sophisticated, original and rich. The several ways in which homeopathy spread across Europe and to the Americas and Asia are examined from a variety of angles, such as personal networks (especially networks of patients), translations of major treatises, homeopathic journals (many of which were founded during the second half of the nineteenth century), international congresses, and also the commercial angle of the production of homeopathic remedies. The authors of the different chapters, in describing the reception of Hahnemann’s ideas for separate countries, cover approximately the same chronological ground (early nineteenth century till the present), asking a set of similar questions. As a volume of collected essays, *Weltgeschichte der Homöopathie* has therefore attained more than common coherence; and national differences in the reception of homeopathy stand out clearly. For Britain, the role played by lay healers is highlighted; for France, Spain and Brazil, the connections with spiritualism are discussed; in the case of the USA, critical attention is given, not only to the nineteenth-century success of homeopathy, but to its subsequent decline (“one of the most difficult questions in the history of homeopathy in the US”); etc. In conclusion, this volume is the most comprehensive, serious treatment of its subject to date.

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Lawrence I Conrad (ed.), *The world of Ibn Tufayl: interdisciplinary perspectives on Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*, Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science, Texts and Studies, vol. 24, Leiden and New York, E J Brill, 1996, pp. vii, 305, Nlg 150.00, \$97.00 (90-04-10135-7).

This collection of papers marks a decisive step forward in the understanding of an Arabic text with many interesting and sometimes mysterious details. Its significance is