

## Book Reviews

together, the whole of this book is much greater than the sum of the eleven articles.

This is not just because Hunter has slightly amended the original papers to add cross-references to the others, although this is undoubtedly useful, and off-sets the inevitable repetition resulting from their original composition as separate pieces. The book is greater than the sum of its parts because Hunter sees it as a model for something much more ambitious than a study of one “great man” in the history of science. Hunter sees it as a model of how intellectual history should be written (p. 14). What this amounts to, and the origins of this idea can be traced back far earlier in Hunter’s work, is a belief in the value of collective biographies, but now conceived on a grand scale. The approach Hunter has in mind is a long way from the collective biography of the fellows he saw himself as presenting in his early study of the Royal Society (*The Royal Society and its fellows, 1660–1700*, 1982, and 1994). Hunter is now calling for a collection made up of Boswellian biographies. “Primarily,” he writes, “I see intellectual history as comprising the study of individual reactions to common problems: hence the best route to a proper understanding of intellectual change in any period seems to me to be an intensive scrutiny of the intellectual personality of each thinker, drawing on all available sources in an essentially biographical manner” (pp. 223–4). There is something essentially Baconian in Hunter’s vision of intellectual history; perhaps the result of working so long on the supreme Baconian philosopher. “We cannot afford to pick and choose the aspects we study of a figure like Boyle”, Hunter writes, “only by tracking him as a whole will we understand him” (p. 153). Reading this collection it is easy to be carried along by the author’s mastery of his subject, in which different facets of Boyle are revealed in successive papers and continually reflect upon other facets revealed in other papers. The result is undoubtedly a brilliant and fascinating gem,

but it is hard to believe that all other historical figures are susceptible to the same treatment, or that all intellectual historians are capable of pursuing it.

**John Henry,**  
University of Edinburgh

**Brian Dolan** (ed.), *Malthus, medicine, and morality: ‘Malthusianism’ after 1798*, Clío Medica 59, Wellcome Institute Series in the History of Medicine, Amsterdam and Atlanta, Rodopi, 2000, pp. v, 232, Hfl. 125.00, £37.50, US\$53.00 (hardback 90-420-0851-2), Hfl. 40.00, £12.00, US\$17.00 (paperback 90-420-0841-5).

In 1998 the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine hosted a one-day symposium on Thomas Robert Malthus, author of the (in)famous (depending upon your point of view) *Essay on the principle of population* (1798). The focus of the symposium was certainly well chosen as there is much to learn about the impact on medicine of Malthus’s theory that unchecked population growth will inevitably outstrip nature’s capacity to provide for us. The Wellcome Institute wisely observed the *Essay*’s 200th birthday by bringing together scholars to shed new light on such questions. I say wisely because, though scholars and activists commonly employ the terms “neo-Malthusian” and “Malthusianism” in debate about issues ranging from Darwinism to international development, confusion over their meanings often leads to misunderstanding.

One result of the symposium is this volume of nine essays, *Malthus, medicine, and morality: ‘Malthusianism’ after 1798*, edited by Brian Dolan. As I began reading the collection I was immediately struck by how controversial the “law” of population has been almost from the moment it was promulgated. Depending upon their moral

## Book Reviews

or political persuasions, doctors, theologians, scientists, political activists and many others endorsed or attacked the *Essay's* injunction to exercise "preventative" checks on population growth in order to avoid inevitable catastrophe in the form of war, famine or pestilence. In exploring these reactions, this volume brings a valuable historical perspective to current debates over Malthus's legacy.

Most of the essays examine either the historical conditions under which Malthus devised his theory or the impact of his ideas on British and Irish commentators. These include two studies of medical history, one by Roy Porter and another by Christopher Hamlin and Kathleen Gallagher-Kamper, that trace contemporary medical responses to the *Essay*. The latter, longer study shows the wide range of doctors' reactions in the nineteenth century to Malthus's claims and suggests a number of explanations for the disparate response. Other authors broach such topics as the influence of Malthus's ideas on the development of Darwin's theory of evolution, contemporary theological reactions to the *Essay*, and the changing moral meanings of "Malthusianism" in Britain until the 1970s.

Three of the essays look beyond Britain's borders as far as Europe and Scandinavia. Brian Dolan recounts Malthus's trip to Scandinavia in 1799 in search of "facts" to marshal in response to critics back home and shows how he wove them into later versions of his *Essay*. And two contributions explore the impact of his ideas on European political activists and intellectuals: Angus McLaren assesses the neo-Malthusian streak in the philosophy and politics of Frenchman Paul Robin (1837–1912), and Antonello La Vergata brings into relief the tensions between biological and sociological interpretations of fertility in European intellectual history from 1798 to 1930. Despite the book's title with its implication of a global perspective, none of the essays looks farther afield. Given the re-emergence of "Malthusianism"

in twentieth-century fears of "overpopulation" in the Third World (particularly India), this Eurocentricism is surprising. Indeed, the majority of the essays focus on the nineteenth century and only two foray into the twentieth when the term "population bomb" was coined.

Together the essays deepened my understanding of Malthus's legacy as a political economist, demographer, and moral philosopher. They help to demystify the man and contextualize his ideas. As a collection, however, the book struck me as odd in the sense that there does not appear to be a particular theme or purpose around which the individual studies are organized. In his introduction, Brian Dolan writes that he hopes the contributions will "provide new historical perspectives on ways of recontextualising, interlinking, and comparing themes central to Malthus, medicine, and morality over the last two hundred years". With such an ambitious yet nebulous goal it is inevitable that significant gaps will exist in a single volume. Still, it is unclear why *these* nine essays were selected to comprise a collection.

Susanne Klausen,  
University of Victoria

Steven J Peitzman, *A new and untried course: Woman's Medical College and Medical College of Pennsylvania, 1850–1998*, New Brunswick and London, Rutgers University Press, 2000, pp. xiii, 322, illus., US\$60.00 (hardback 0-8135-2815-1), US\$22.00 (paperback 0-8135-2816-X).

In the long history of educating doctors, any mention of women until recently was rare indeed. Even twenty-five years ago, it was still something of an anomaly for a historian to be much concerned about the subject of women in medicine. Today, all this has changed and it often seems that